



HAVE A SAY ON COUNCIL BUDGET

Report by Lee Watton

THOUSANDS of people are to have their say on Dudley Council's controversial budget plans.

The move comes as the authority looks to make £20 million worth of cuts over the next three years.

Under the proposals Dudley Museum and Art Gallery would close and up to 275 jobs would be axed. Library opening hours could be cut with public toilets, dog bins and gritting lorries also in the firing line.

Proposals also include a council tax increase of just under two per cent, the equivalent of 43p a week for a band D property.

Bosses say the authority is facing unprecedented cuts in funding from the Government and needs to dramatically change the way it delivers services.

The council has now launched its annual The Big Question consultation, asking residents for their views on the proposed budget.

More than 6,000 residents took part last year and more are expected to do so this time around. It will run for 12 weeks until January 31. Residents will be able to take part through the council's website at www.dudley.gov.uk or by using #DudleyBudget on Twitter. People can also pick up hard copy versions from borough libraries and Dudley Council Plus in Castle Street, Dudley.

Innovative

Cabinet member for finance, Councillor David Sparks, said: "Over the past two years, the number of people who have taken part in our Big Question consultations has been bigger than any other budget consultation ever held by Dudley Council.

"These are unprecedented times for any local authority as our funding continues to be reduced from the Government, and we have to look at new and innovative ways of delivering services. This year's Big Question is very much about finding out what services people think can be delivered in another form, by the community and voluntary sector."

Councillor Sparks said the savings are needed in response to a £65m reduction in Government funding since 2010.

For 2015/16 Dudley's Revenue Support Grant, its main source of Government funding, reduced by £61 per person.

At a recent meeting, the council's controlling Labour group came under fire over the cuts. Conservative leader, Councillor Patrick Harley, suggested the authority should have been better prepared. He said: "Austerity isn't new. It's been here for the last six or so years. Yet here we have been with another budget and more services cut or stopped altogether."

But leader of Dudley Council Councillor Pete Lowe said: "We have seen significant cuts in Dudley, over and above that of elsewhere. We have seen cuts of £61 per person in Dudley compared to £18 in Windsor. How is that fair?"

KRIS KRINGLE BRINGS MAGIC TO MIRACLE MUSICAL



J Paul Murdoch, who plays Kris Kringle, is pictured with Isabelle Westley-Smith and Isla Tallon, who both share the lead role in the Cradley Heath Amateur Operatic Society's production of Miracle on 34th Street, an American family favourite festive tale

AN OPERATIC society's dazzling new show will give a twist to a Christmas classic.

Cradley Heath Amateur Operatic Society is putting on a musical version of Miracle on 34th Street.

The society have taken the 1994 festive film set in New York, which starred Richard Attenborough as Kris Kringle, and added sing-

ing and dancing to wow audiences watching the show at Brierley Hill Civic Hall this week.

Anne Saunders, who has been a committee member with the society for 40 years, said: "I think it's very colourful and it's going to be superb. We think it's the first time anyone in the Black Country has done a musical version.

"It did run in the West End for a while but our version is different and a lot of the music is very catchy."

The show is on tonight, Friday and Saturday at 7.30pm with a 2.30pm matinee also on Saturday. Tickets cost £15 for evening performances, £10 at the matinee. For tickets call 0121 585 7380 or visit the Bank Street venue.

COURT

Mosque dispute cost will be nearly £1m

COSTS linked to the court battle over a proposed new mosque in Dudley, which seems to have finally reached an end after ten years, will total around £1 million.

Dudley Muslim Association's plans were dealt a major blow after judges ruled in favour of Dudley Council's bid to take back the land (see pages 2 and 6).

Association officials say they have already forked out more than £750,000 in legal and planning fees. Now they will have to cover the council's legal bill, thought to run into six figures. The Court of Appeal is yet to rule on the exact costs

FESTIVE

Cradley Heath is all set to light up

THE Mayor of Sandwell will be joined by Santa and other guests for a fun-filled family Christmas lights switch-on in Cradley Heath on Saturday.

Mayor Councillor Barbara Price will officially switch the lights on in the High Street at 6pm. But the fun will begin at 3pm and run through to 7pm.

There will be live entertainment from school choirs, the Salvation Army band and performers from Conegre Performing Arts. Road closures are in operation from 1 to 8pm.

TRANSPORT

Nuisance parkers handed £100 fines

MORE than 500 fines have been handed to motorists parking badly at railway and metro stations in the Black Country.

Since January, 514 Penalty Charge Notices, each with a fine of £100, have been given out at Centro's six park and ride sites. Most of the fines — 230 in total — were issued at Stourbridge Junction.

But the numbers appear to be falling since an initial surge in January and February saw 114 drivers penalised.

At Sandwell and Dudley rail station 184 fines were handed out this year. There were also 31 at Rowley Regis and 20 at Coseley in the blitz on nuisance parking.

INSIDE

BAND AIMING FOR THE TOP



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Actor Kascion turns on Christmas lights



Rising star Kascion Franklin

A BLACK Country actor who played the starring role in Sir Lenny Henry's drama Danny and the Human Zoo will switch on Dudley's Christmas lights.

Kascion Franklin, from Wednesbury, has the honour of launching the annual festive celebration.

The 27-year-old played the lead role in the TV drama which was screened in August and received favourable reviews. Written by Sir Lenny, it was a fictionalised account drawing upon his early life as a teenager in Dudley.

Kascion said: "It's a real honour to

be asked to switch on the lights. It's nice to give back to Dudley in my own little way, as it played a part in the first big thing in my career."

A brand new lighting system has been installed in the town centre as part of the multi-million pound market place redevelopment.

The switch-on takes place on Saturday at 5pm. Before that moment, there will be five hours of fun in Stone Street Square and Churchill Shopping Centre, including funfair, cookery demonstrations and visit from Father Christmas.

Meanwhile, the cast of Danny and the Human Zoo have received a Movie Screen and TV Award (MVSA) for the acclaimed drama. The one-off production won the award for best TV film.

It was filmed in the Black Country and based loosely around Sir Lenny's experiences growing up in Dudley and on the comedy circuit in the 1970s.

The Black Country actor, writer and comic, who last week won the Paving The Way honour at the Mobo Awards, said he plans to 'tell more stories about the Midlands'.

Council 'caved in' to pressure over mosque

MUSLIM leaders claim Dudley Council bosses 'caved in' to opposition — including pressure from far right groups — to block its plans for a new mosque in the town.

Dudley Muslim Association (DMA) has spent a decade bidding to build a mosque on overgrown disused land in Hall Street.

But its plan has been left in tatters after the Court of Appeal ruled last week that it has to hand the site back to the council.

Five far-right protests have been held in Dudley since 2010 over the issue, including three by the England Defence League.

Dudley Muslim Association spokesman Amjid Raza said he believed the protests had not influenced the decision of judges but brought 'bad publicity' to the mosque bid.

"The project was quite high-profile and and there was quite a lot of bad publicity," he said. "Faced with vociferous opposition from various groups, the Dudley leadership at all levels caved in.

Ambition

"This leadership can regrettably take pride in preventing an otherwise respectful and co-operative community from fulfilling its ambition to build up-to-date premises in Hall Street.

"We are sorry to our community that we were unable to fulfil their dream of a replacement mosque and community centre. Our community will now need a period of calm reflection and consider its future progress. We would sincerely like to thank profoundly all our fellow citizens who supported us and stood with us in our endeavours to build a new mosque and facilities."

Lords Justices Lewison and Treacy and Lady Justice Gloster unanimously ruled that the contract should be respected and the council was entitled to return of the land.

Lord Justice Lewison told the court the case was a 'sad story'. In his judgement he said: "It is to be hoped that further cooperation between the parties will result in the identification and acquisition of an alternative site on which the new mosque can be built."

● Mosque saga — see page 6

Police appeal on shop axe attack



The masked robber uses an axe to shatter the shop window at Cashbrokers in Halesowen

A FRESH appeal went out today following an attempted robbery at a Halesowen pawnbrokers by an axe-wielding masked thug.

The robbery at Cashbrokers, which was filmed on CCTV, was foiled after the shop manager confronted the crooks.

But two weeks on from the raid on October 27, West Midlands Po-

lice is still trying to track down the culprits who tried to smash their way through the shop's window in broad daylight.

Manager Henry Hunter, aged 55, a martial arts expert, shouted at the raider and his getaway driver and ran out to confront the pair, who fled empty-handed after the axe was used to smash the window.

The thug dropped the axe and jumped back into a dark blue BMW, which then raced off.

Officers are still trying to trace the car involved in the incident, which took place at 10.30am on Tuesday (Oct 27). Anyone with information should call police on 101, or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Caparo boss dies in fall from luxury London flat

THE future of crisis-hit industrial giant Caparo faces further turmoil after its boss fell to his death from his London penthouse.

Angad Paul, aged 45, the son of Caparo founder Lord Paul of Marylebone, was found dead on Sunday at the rear of the exclusive apartment building in Portland Place he shared with his family.

Police say that his death is not being treated as suspicious.

Mr Paul was due to visit the Black Country last week but did not attend the scheduled meeting with administrators PwC and Walsall South MP Valerie Vaz at Caparo Atlas Fastenings site in Heath Road, Darlaston.

Father

His father, who has been chancellor of the University of Wolverhampton since 1999, had been due to visit Wolverhampton University today (Thu).

Mr Paul's death comes just two weeks after administrators were called into Caparo, the £370m-a-year business that employed 1,700 workers across the Black Country.

The move has already seen 323 jobs go across the region, with the likelihood of more to follow.

Mr Paul took over as chief executive of the firm in 1996.

Caparo went into administration last month, leading to job losses as plants in Dudley, Cradley Heath, Oldbury, Darlaston and West Bromwich were hit.

Road victim, 53, has been named

A MAN who died after he was hit by a car in Netherton has been named as Gary Wroblewski.

Floral tributes have been placed at the scene where Mr Wroblewski, aged 53, was knocked down.

He was found in the road in a critical condition near an abandoned car which had crashed into a billboard at the junction of Cradley Road and Marriott Road on Friday night.

Despite efforts to save him by passers-by carrying out CPR and an ambulance crew assisted by police, he died at the scene.

A 19-year-old local man has been arrested on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving.

West Midlands Police are appealing for witnesses to call 101.

Howzat for cricket club's quiz night?

LYE Cricket Club is holding a quiz night in its pavilion off Stourbridge Road tomorrow (Fri) from 7.30pm. It is open to teams from club members and the public.

To find out more visit the website www.lyecricketclub.co.uk

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Fees rise at Age Concern as fund cuts have impact

DAY care fees have risen at Age Concern centres in Halesowen and Stourbridge after funding was cut.

Age Concern lost around a third of its grant that helped fund transport for elderly people to and from the centres and activities while there.

Around £7,000 has been slashed from its grant totalling £21,000 – forcing charity officials to increase daily fees from £8.50 to £9.50.

Chairman Ken Turner admitted they were ‘disappointed’ but added: “We need to be more self sufficient. We need to look for funding outside existing avenues.”

Age Concern runs Halesowen Day Centre in Green Lane, The Elton Centre in Stourbridge and at Mary Stevens Day Care Centre in Oldswinford.

The £9.50 fees are also spent on providing luncheon clubs. Age Concern officials say this is less than other similar organisations in the area.

The £7,000 was cut from its Office of Public Health money, which is co-ordinated by Dudley Council following the abolition of primary care trusts, but now the council faces major budget cuts.

Savage

Councillor Dave Branwood, responsible for adult social care services, said: “Council funding for Age Concern’s day centre provision this year remains unchanged, but there has been a small reduction in monies for information and advice service.

“Details of funding arrangements for next year have not yet been agreed. What is clear is that Adult Social Care across the country is in the midst of a funding crisis. If George Osborne’s Autumn spending review is as savage as we expect then, sadly, excellent organisations like Age Concern will inevitably face funding pressures. Dudley Council remains committed to protect services to the elderly wherever possible.”

Course to help older motorists

OLDER drivers in Dudley can put themselves on the road to success with a free safety course next month.

The Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) has teamed up with Dudley Council and West Midlands Fire Service to deliver the driving safer for longer course. The course will run on December 5 at Haden Cross Community Fire Station, Cradley Heath, from 9.15am to 12.30pm.

It aims to boost safety for drivers aged 60 and over, offering to give drivers more confidence behind the wheel.

The theory-based course will focus on safety and awareness skills and refresh drivers’ knowledge of the Highway Code.

Places are limited to 30 and can be booked on (01384) 815433 or via road.safety@dudley.gov.uk

Name errors led to wrong body blunder



Philip Bradbourn MEP: second funeral

A SPELLING mistake was among a string of errors that led to the wrong body being cremated of West Midlands MEP Philip Bradbourn at Bushbury Crematorium, a report reveals.

The 63-year-old from Tipton died on December 20 last year at Good Hope Hospital in Sutton Coldfield following a battle with cancer. His funeral took place at in January. However, the man who was cremated was Philip Bradbourn, who had died at Birmingham’s Queen Elizabeth Hospital on December 24.

Staff at Good Hope’s mortuary repeatedly failed to carry out accurate identity checks on the two bodies, the Heart of England NHS Trust said in the report, with written records either incomplete or inaccurate, leading to confusion.

Bosses at the trust have apologised

for the mistake, which they have attributed to a ‘complex and multifactorial’ set of circumstances.

The report revealed a series of failings on the part of two funeral directors and Good Hope. It says that as Good Hope’s mortuary was nearing capacity, staff requested four bodies – including Mr Bradbourn’s – to be moved to Central England Co-operative Funeralcare in Lichfield.

Phone

The names of those to be moved were given over the phone but not followed up with an email listing details, the report said.

The funeral home collected Mr Bradbourn’s body but sent it back to Good Hope four days later after his family requested a cremation. On the same day, Mr Bradbourn’s body –

which had been wrongly identified as Mr Bradbourn’s – was also sent back to the hospital.

The name ‘Bradbourn’ had been scrawled onto the accompanying paperwork, over-writing Mr Bradbourn’s name. Two doctors signed off the cremation for Mr Bradbourn but the body of Mr Bradbourn was released.

Dr Andrew Catto, of Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust, said: “We are very sorry that this incredibly distressing situation has happened.”

A spokesman for Central England Co-operative said: “Our priority has been to work closely with all concerned so that we can learn from this unfortunate incident and build further appropriate safeguards for the future.”

A second funeral for Mr Bradbourn took place at Wolverhampton’s St Peter’s Collegiate Church in February.

£35,000 roundabout sculpture is step closer

A PROJECT creating a £35,000 sculpture on a Halesowen roundabout is gathering pace as a fundraising scheme gets under way.

Metal artist Luke Perry is creating the anvil and hammer sculpture after being commissioned by the town’s chamber of trade.

People have urged officials to brighten up Grange Road Island at the junction with A456 Manor Way which is currently bare.

It is hoped the sculpture will create an improved image for motorists on their way into the town.

Plans were revealed two months ago by Halesowen Chamber of Trade. Now the fundraising bid will get under way after a meeting on Friday.

The sculpture will cost around £28,000 and landscaping is estimated to cost a further £7,000.

Halesowen Chamber of Trade chairman Wayne Edwards said: “We will have more of an update on Friday but plans are all in place to push forward and hopefully get started very soon.

Asset

“The sculpture would be a real asset to the community.

“From Friday’s meeting we aim to know more about the specifics in terms of timescale, which we believe will be around six months and how much money is needed.

“It’s something the people of Halesowen should definitely be looking forward to and we hope people will continue to get behind us in raising money.”

Mr Edwards said he believed the funding would be found and he was preparing to hold further talks with Dudley councillors and borough officials about the project.

Mr Perry will create the sculpture in his family-run factory in Cradley Heath.

It is designed on the idea of a hammer and anvil representing the metal working trades that dominated Halesowen’s heritage.

He said: “As a symbol it is not only representative but accurate, swords were forged from the medieval period in the town using these tools, nail-making, other cottage industry trades and larger industrial metalworking processes would use these



An impression of how the sculpture celebrating metal working in Halesowen would look

simple tools. In addition to this, it is also part of the Halesowen borough coat of arms.

“I personally feel that it is a very strong design – one which will work on the site for numerous reasons practically, visually with site lines from the

various access points and also in a way which captures the spirit of the area locally and as a larger community in the industrial midlands.”

“I see this piece being something which I and the local people will become very proud of.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

Venue is to name bar after Tommy

BLACK Country comedian Tommy Mondon will be honoured by having a room at an entertainment venue in Dudley named after him.

The bar at Dudley Town Hall is set to be renamed the Tommy Mondon Lounge in honour of the Halesowen-born funnyman, who died last year, and a portrait will be unveiled by Mayor of Dudley Councillor Steve Waltho to commemorate the popular comic. Councillor Waltho said: “Tommy Mondon achieved legendary status and it is only right we honour him and his work.”

Singing spaceman to land at venue

CANADIAN astronaut Chris Hadfield, whose performance of David Bowie’s Space Oddity on the International Space Station became an internet sensation, is coming to Birmingham.

An Evening with Chris Hadfield takes place in Symphony Hall on January 19 at 7.30pm.

He will be giving an illustrated talk about his experiences during five months in space aboard the ISS and performing songs including Space Oddity. Tickets start at £28 plus fee. See www.thsh.co.uk

Double the fun in vintage comedy

TWO classic 1930s comedies featuring Laurel & Hardy are being shown on the big screen in Dudley.

The Music Box, in which the hapless duo deliver a piano, and Block-Heads which finds Stan still fighting the First World War until Ollie rescues him, will be shown in high definition for the first time at the Showcase Cinema, Castlegate Way. The double feature will be shown at 2pm on Sunday and again at 7.30pm on Tuesday. See www.laurelandhardyroadshow.co.uk

Carol singers needed for community event

DUDLEY Council for Voluntary Service is looking for musicians and singers to take part in a community carol singing event in Brierley Hill.

The singing in the town centre will follow the organisation’s Christmas fair in Brierley Hill Civic Hall from 4.30pm on Saturday, December 5.

Anyone who wishes to take part can visit the Dudley CVS office in Albion St, Brierley Hill, or for more details about the event or the organisation call (01384) 573381.

Cut-throat business

STEPHEN Sondheim’s murderous musical masterpiece Sweeney Todd is being brought to Birmingham Hippodrome this month.

Welsh National Opera will stage the gory revenge musical from November 19 to 21, relocating the story from the early Victorian era to the 1980s.

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IN some versions of this column the cost of the HS2 railway appeared as £60 million. If only. The true cost is £60 billion, or if you prefer, £60,000 million. If you can cope with all the zeros, it's actually £60,000,000,000 or about £1 billion per mile. Confused? I think that is what they want.

HOW insurance works: A friend who always parked his car on his drive is moving to a house with a garage. So he told his insurance company of the change and asked by how much his premium would be reduced, in view of the added security of parking in a garage. The insurance company explained that there's no reduction but he would be charged a £26 admin fee for notifying them.

SO farewell, Colin Welland, who has died aged 81. I saw him on stage once and it was a memorable performance. It wasn't a play but a political rally. Welland was at Birmingham Town



Hall in May 1987 speaking at a pre-election meeting in support of Neil Kinnock and Labour. The former Z-Cars star predicted that this time Labour would win. "The Tories will be so far behind," Welland thundered, "that all they'll see is our big fat arse." The audience loved it. Welland then introduced Kinnock "honestly and with utter conviction, the next prime minister of Britain." As it happened, Kinnock managed to lose not only the 1987 election but the 1992 one, too. Great oratory is a wonderful thing but if the voters don't trust you, it's just words.

HOW insurance works 2: A reader's dog developed a urinary infection. He rushed her to the vet where the treatment and drugs cost £130. He claimed on his pet insurance, to be told that after the £100 excess and a further excess for the age of the dog, 12, the insurer would pay nothing. However, as the customer had formally made a claim, the insurer was withdrawing all further cover for similar diseases.

TERMS for our time. "The dolly of death." A spider's web, as described on Autumnwatch (BBC1)

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Council's top earners paid more than £1m

DUDLEY Council's top 10 earners take home a total of more than a million pounds a year.

This comes at a time the authority plans to shut the town's museum and art gallery and axe up to 275 jobs.

The chief executive's salary has increased to more than £160,000. Sarah Norman currently holds the chief executive role after John Polychronakis retired last year.

By Richard Guttridge

The council is trying to make savings of £20 million over the next three years.

Bosses have said another £50m of savings will still likely be needed even if its current proposals for cuts go through.

Finance boss Councillor David Sparks said cuts to services such as the museum, as well as reducing opening hours at libraries and at the Red House Glass Cone in Wordsley, were necessary to avoid the authority going bankrupt.

Policy

According to the council's pay policy statement for 2015, the chief executive is paid between £160,000 and £165,000 a year, an increase from £157,000.

The strategic director for people's services takes home £127,000, plus an £18,000 'statutory postholder allowance' for being both Director Children's Services and Director Adult Social Services.

Another strategic director earns £117,000, plus a £10,000 postholder allow-

ance, while a third strategic director earns £117,000. Eight chief officers are paid £90,780.

Bosses at the Labour-controlled authority have decided to take on a 'senior public health intelligence analyst', earning more than £30,000.

Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group has put £25,000 towards the new post, while £15,000 will come from the council's health budget.

Leader Councillor Pete Lowe said: "We now have one of the leanest senior management structures in the country which makes us more efficient than ever before."

"We have reduced the number of senior management posts from 23 to 12. With such an innovative and lean new structure, the reduced number of senior managers have taken on additional work and responsibilities. This is reflected in the salary levels."

Homes at Guest hospital site



The Guest Hospital site in Tipton Road, Dudley

WORK has started on the £18 million revamp of a landmark former hospital site in Dudley.

Developer Wates Living Space has begun to overhaul the Guest Hospital site in Tipton Road where 157 homes are to be built.

Construction is being carried out by Wates, alongside Dudley Council and the Homes and Communities Agency, with completion in summer 2019.

Two historic buildings from the hospital — the administration block and the porter's lodge — will be converted into housing as part of the project.

Demolished

Other buildings will be demolished to make way for houses and flats.

A total of 118 homes will be sold while 39 will be available for rent through the council.

Councillor Gaye Partridge, cabinet member for housing, said: "This is an extremely welcome and exciting regeneration project."

"It will enable the provision of more affordable housing for our residents and bring a historic building back into use offering luxury apartments."

Court hand large bill to bolshy builder

A ROGUE builder who carried out shoddy work and used aggressive business practices in Halesowen has been told for now more than £7,000.

Simon Pound, trading as Complete Landscapes, of Oak Street, Kingswinford, pleaded guilty to six offences under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 and two offences under the Fraud Act 2006 in front of Dudley magistrates. The prosecution was brought forward by Dudley Council's trading standards team.

The court heard on October 26, 51-year-old Pound failed to notify two customers of their cancellation rights, failed to provide them with paperwork and failed to carry out professional diligence about building a wall, steps and laying paving and blocks. When the customers complained about the poor quality of work, Pound — whose home address was listed as in Poole, Dorset — threatened to remove the patios.

The court imposed a 12-month community order with 200 hours of unpaid work and ordered him to pay compensation of £5,445 to the two complainants with £2,361 costs to the council.

Speaking afterwards, Councillor Rachel Harris said: "This prosecution sends a clear message that we will protect consumers from rogue traders."

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Consultation over plans for Sandwell cuts

THOUSANDS of residents are to have their say on multi-million pound budget cuts facing cash strapped Sandwell Council.

More than 200 jobs have been axed during the last 18 months at the authority which is currently trying to save up to £40 million due to a reduction in Government funding.

It launched its Facing the Future programme last year to find £22m of savings and this has been extended to achieve cuts of £38m by 2018.

Sandwell Council has launched a budget planning survey asking people to tell them where they think money should be spent and how services could be improved as part of a major review.

Residents are also being asked to choose their priorities from different levels of council services – allocating points to their preferred options.

Sandwell Council deputy leader, councillor Steve Eling, people living in the borough must have a say on the services. "It is all the more important now with the levels of cuts that are being imposed by Government. Our budget has already been reduced by £132 million since 2010 but there are more cuts to make," he explained.

Residents have until November 23 to give their views. The budget planning survey is available online at www.sandwell.gov.uk/consultation

Genting Arena show for Jeff Lynne's ELO

BRUM music legend Jeff Lynne is to play in his home city in the new year, bringing back the Electric Light Orchestra. He is releasing his first album in 10 years as Jeff Lynne's ELO. Alone in the Universe goes on sale tomorrow (Fri) with tickets for the April 16 concert at the Genting Arena also going on sale at 9am that day.

Heathens hoping for return to Monmore Stadium track

Grants up for grabs to help with fitness



Mayor of Sandwell Councillor Barbara Price launches the CANDO fitness scheme for Sandwell borough

COMMUNITY groups in Sandwell can apply for funding to help people stay fit and healthy.

Grants of up to £5,000 are now available from Sandwell Council and can be spent on new or existing sports facilities in the borough.

As part of its drive to boost levels of physical activity, the council has introduced Community Activity Network Development Officers (CANDO)

in each of Sandwell's six towns. The CANDO will work with community organisations on their ideas to introduce new sports facilities or improve existing ones.

Councillor Yvonne Davies, cabinet member for adult social care and health, said: "The health and wellbeing of our residents is one of our council's top priorities and I am pleased to offer this opportunity to community

groups to provide physical activity for local community.

"I urge local communities to take up this opportunity and apply for funding to help people of Sandwell get more active."

Community groups can apply for six weeks or 12 months of funding, with up to £5,000 available for the first phase. To apply visit www.sandwell.gov.uk/cando website.

CRADLEY Heathens have confirmed they are in negotiations in a bid to return to Wolverhampton's Monmore Stadium for the 2016 season.

Both stadium owners Ladbroke's and Heathens Speedway Ltd have been in talks in an effort to try and take the club back to Wolverhampton but stress that further discussions are still necessary.

A club statement issued this week said: "The current management team are doing everything within their power to ensure this famous club continues to race into the new campaign."

"While these talks continue, no further discussions will take place regarding the sale of the club as the management trio would be willing to continue at Monmore Green with the help and support of the Heathens Supporters Trust, Ollie Ommer Children's Club and their loyal group of supporters."

Patience

"We would like to thank our fans, riders and sponsors for their patience and hope we can bring some positive news in the near future," the statement added.

The club has been sharing grounds at various speedway venues, in Stoke, Birmingham and Wolverhampton, since the sale of their Dudley Wood stadium for housing 20 years ago. Dudley Wood had been their home for 48 years.

Meanwhile, generous speedway fans have donated £500 to a charity that supports injured riders from the sport. Supporters of Cradley Heathens donated the cash to the Speedway Riders' Benevolent Fund before a recent race meeting.

Heathens Director Nigel Pearson said: "The Ben Fund is a great cause supporting injured riders."

Rail reason for Queen's Brum visit

THE Queen and Duke of Edinburgh will officially open and tour revamped Birmingham New Street Station next week, arriving aboard the Royal Train on Thursday, November 19.

The Queen will meet members of staff and apprentices who were involved in the construction project. Her Majesty will then take part in a short ceremony, unveiling a plaque to herald the completion of the multi-million pound revamp.

On leaving the station, the Queen and Prince Philip will visit the Pals War Memorial, which commemorates railway workers who died in the First World War, for a dedication and wreath-laying ceremony.

Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh will also visit the Midland Metro tram extension at Bull Street in the city centre where the Queen will name and then board one of the new trams.

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



Public free to ask how our money is spent

PEOPLE who know me will tell you I am seldom lost for words. But even I am struggling to comprehend the thinking of our public servants when it comes the Freedom of Information Act.

Take, for example, Keith Ireland, the managing director of Wolverhampton Council. He says the questions people are asking under the Act are not what it was originally intended for, and come mainly from people looking to 'make trouble' for the council.

Sorry about that old boy. And I think I know the type of questions he means. Like "how much money do councils spend on consultants and agency staff when reducing library hours?" Or "How many times do they use anti-terror legislation to snoop on people suspected of not picking up dog poo?"

Of course the great and the good don't want us pesky troublemakers asking questions like that. Much better we stick to nice questions, such as "why are you so jolly good at everything?," and "can we have a few more parking restrictions, please?"

Problem is, these are not the burning questions on everybody's lips, and that's not quite how democracy works. The idea is the public asks whatever questions it wants to about how our money is spent, and the public servants duly oblige. It's why they are called public servants.

And here's a good question, which nobody seems to have asked yet.

"Why did it take an Act of Parliament to make councils answer simple questions from the people they are paid to serve?" No rush, an answer within 20 working days will be fine.

■ ■ ■

NOW I'll square with you. When the World Health Organisation last week branded processed meats 'carcinogenic', and said fresh red meat 'probably caused cancer', I was worried.

I really wished I liked lettuce, salad, and the occasional oily fish, but the fact is I really can't bring myself to eat the stuff. To me, a meal is not a meal unless it has at least some beef, pork or lamb with it.

And I'm pretty partial to pork scratchings as well. Yet, according to the bof-fins, eating this sort of thing daily leads to an 18 per cent increase in the chances of getting cancer. Which makes my diet sound about as healthy as driving a Volkswagen.

I've since read that the risk is not quite as great as it sounds. A squeaky clean lettuce muncher typically has a six per cent chance of developing bowel cancer, while a red-blooded carnivore will probably have a seven per cent likelihood.

It probably is wise for us all to keep an eye on our meat consumption, and it surely is a good idea to discourage children from picking up bad habits. Even so, I don't think I will panic just yet.



Amjid Raza is spokesman for Dudley Muslim Association



Dudley Central Mosque is too small for the Muslim community



Dudley Council leader Councillor Pete Lowe welcomes the ruling

Council finally win mosque land dispute

Judges have decided that the proposed site for a new mosque must be handed back, **ANDREW TURTON** reports

DUDLEY Council has finally won its legal battle to stop plans for a new mosque in the town.

But Muslim leaders have vowed not to give up until they had exhausted every avenue in getting the mosque built.

After a decade-long controversy, Court of Appeal judges unanimously ruled in favour of the council over its bid to buy back land in Hall Street from Dudley Muslim Association (DMA).

Plans first emerged for the mosque to be built at the site back in 2003 as a replacement for Dudley Central Mosque in Castle Hill.

But the matter descended into a long-running dispute between the council and the DMA after a planning application was rejected in 2007.

This latest ruling, which comes after a two-day hearing held in London, states DMA must transfer the Hall Street land back to the council in January.

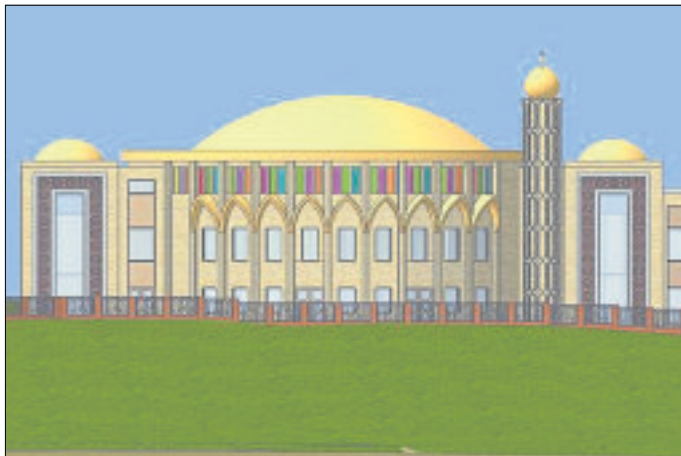
Reflection

But DMA has refused to rule out another legal bid to salvage its plans. Officials said they will take a 'period of calm reflection' before considering future legal options.

The Court of Appeal has ruled that DMA should also pay the council's legal costs, which have not yet been realised. But the authority confirmed last year it had spent £213,000 at that stage on legal fees.

Earlier this year, DMA offered an out-of-court settlement to pay the local authority £325,000 to finally end dispute and retain the land. But the council's cabinet rejected the offer in August after recommendations by the authority's overview and scrutiny management board following a two-day hearing.

Dudley Council leader, Councillor Pete Lowe, said the authority now wanted to work



An artist's impression of the mosque and community facilities intended for Dudley's Hall Street

again with DMA to find an alternative site for the mosque.

"We welcome the unanimous ruling which made it clear that the council has always acted lawfully and reasonably throughout this process," he said.

"Our open and transparent scrutiny process, supported by all political parties, was crucial in enabling the cabinet to make informed decisions.

"I hope we can now put this long-running issue behind us and move forward in the best interests of the town.

"We have set out very clearly our intention to support DMA in finding an alternative site. Our door remains open and we will continue to offer to work with DMA."

The legal hearings have centred on a contractual dispute dating back to 2005, when the council transferred the land at Hall Street to

the Muslim association. A clause in the contract stated that the land would transfer back to the council if the proposed development was not completed by the end of 2008.

Lawyers for the association had fought to stop the council seizing the land, where the old Nuttall's factory stands alongside Duncan Edwards Way.

But DMA suffered a blow last year when the High Court blocked an appeal against an earlier ruling.

In the latest hearing, lawyers claimed DMA was victim of an 'abuse of power' by the council over 'delays' to obtain planning permission before the deadline set by the council.

DMA spokesman Amjid Raza, said: "The Muslim community is naturally deeply disappointed with the judgement of the court in not allowing our case to proceed to full trial.

"All the judges who heard this case at vari-

ous levels expressed sympathy with the community's predicament.

"The community has made every effort to work with the council and other leaderships to construct a modern fit-for-purpose mosque and community facilities to meet the ever-growing and pressing religious, educational, caring and social needs of our disadvantaged community.

"The land at Hall Street was acquired from Dudley Council after a number of site-swaps at the council's request for above purposes."

Three far right protests have been held in the town this year, including by members of the English Defence League, in the wake of proposals for the mosque. Britain First and All Football Fans/Firms Against Islamisation also held demos in the town this year.

The marches brought disruption for traders with roads forced to shut and a huge police presence being brought into the town to keep the peace.

Since the plans first surfaced, more than 80,000 people have signed a petition against them.

Justice

Former UKIP and Liberal Democrat councillor Malcolm Davis, who helped organise the petitions, said: He said: "I think that justice has been done and I hope now this will be the end of it."

The Bishop of Dudley has called on the 'spirit of reconciliation' to prevail over the long-running saga on the future of the mosque, as he offered to broken new talks.

The Right Reverend Graham Usher said he hoped there can be a 'long-term solution'.

He said: "The Court of Appeal judgement will inevitably bring a variety of emotions to people in Dudley.

"It's important that we move forward from this decision in a spirit of reconciliation and shared endeavour for the good of all in our town.

"I am conscious that the existing Dudley Mosque is inadequate for the Muslim community's needs and they are in urgent need of new and improved facilities.

"I stand ready to help facilitate a conversation between Dudley Council and the Dudley Muslim Association to try to find a new vision that will fulfil the community's needs."

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Book's important message for women

I HAVE just read the book *My Own Story*, by Emmeline Pankhurst, which was the inspiration for the film *Suffragettes*.

This account should be read by every woman in order that they may know what women went through to get the vote.

It is a harrowing account of the struggle made by women of all classes against the chicanery and deceit of the government. The brutality meted out to these women, especially during forced feeding was horrifying and barbaric, all this by order of the government – men.

I am proud to be a member of Townswomen's Guilds which were started in 1929, when women at last got the vote!

It was realised that after being kept down and tied to the kitchen sink for so many years, some women needed to be taught what they could do to widen their horizons, that there is a life outside the home, without neglecting their wifely duties, and in so doing, they would be able to use their votes wisely and be more fulfilled.

Townswomen's Guilds is a non-political, non-sectarian, and non-racist organisation open to all women ir-

respective of race, creed, or political persuasion, which still campaigns for different things by putting forth reasoned arguments and suggestions.

Further and fuller information may be obtained from the Townswomen's Headquarters on Tyburn Road, Erdington, telephone 0121 326 0400. They would be only too pleased to furnish you with the details of what we stand for, past successes and details of guilds near you. Incidentally, we are nothing to do with the WI, jam and Jerusalem!

MRS N T CROSSBEE
Smethwick

Why time off for good behaviour?

YET again we hear of someone who has committed a serious crime and has been given a considerable prison sentence by the judge – only to be released after serving a fraction of the time given.

Is this a reward for behaving well whilst in prison, because if they had behaved well on the outside then they would not be there in the first place.

Or is it some sort of unwritten rule that they don't have to complete the time the judge gave them anyway?

It is about time that offenders, instead of getting time off for good behaviour, did the full time and got ADDED time for bad behaviour.

The present system just makes a mockery of the sentence given by the judge and I am sure they must wonder why they bother.

J JAMES
Wordsley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
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Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL

dudley.chron@
expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Clearing up myths over fox hunting

AS the traditional fox hunting season gets under way, it's time to clear up a few myths about foxes and fox hunting.

It's been 10 years since hunting with dogs for sport was banned. It's a popular law among country dwellers and townfolk alike, with eight out of 10 people keen for it to remain in place. It's also very successful, with the highest number and percentage of convictions of any wildlife animal welfare law in the UK and even better, has successfully reduced animal cruelty.

Yet still hunt supporters will cry foul play and claim fox hunting is necessary for wildlife management. But a world expert on foxes reveals that hunting is an unnecessary activity as foxes are not the pests that hunts like to claim.

A new report from Professor Stephen Harris from the University of Bristol shows that hunting does not reduce fox populations and killing foxes can in fact increase their numbers in a given area as more turn up to compete for the vacant territory. He also shows that fox predation does not have a significant impact on farmers. In fact, farmers can benefit because of the number of rabbits taken by foxes.

TOM QUINN
Campaigns Director
League Against Cruel Sports

Bag it or should be ashamed

WITH reference to the letter printed in The Chronicle on October 22, 2015: E Ward Davies, Stourbridge, you should be ashamed of yourself stating because you now have to pay for a carrier bag you will be leaving your dog's poo behind.

Your dogs and your responsibility to pick up after them.

If you can afford four dogs you can afford to go and buy a pack of bin bags to collect your dog's poo in.

Free carrier bags were issued by stores for the purpose of carrying the items you had purchased.

Yes, you could then recycle them whichever way you chose to.

I do, however, agree with you with regards to irresponsible people leaving dirty nappies around. You are now going to join that minority with regards to your intentions, by leaving your dog's poo behind.

Shame on you.
J E WILLETTS
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The parade went through the town centre to Coronation Gardens



Standard bearers from uniformed services and veteran organisations at the cenotaph service



Veterans line up at the start of the remembrance parade from Top Church



We will remember them — veterans at the service in Dudley



Crosses left at Dudley Council House in memory of those lost their lives in conflicts

Crowds honour fallen

THOUSANDS gathered in Dudley to pay tribute to members of the armed forces killed in conflict.

Families from across the borough crowded into Coronation Gardens as civic dignitaries led the Remembrance Sunday proceedings.

These included a service at the cenotaph in Ednam Road and a parade featuring armed forces veterans. Music was provided by the Salvation Army band and Dudley College students.

There were poignant moments as hymns and the national anthem were sang with pride, the

Last Post was played and a two-minute silence observed.

Councillor Steve Waltho, Mayor of Dudley, said: "It is a great honour to be leading our community in marking the contribution and sacrifice made by our Armed Forces at this Remembrance Sunday parade and service."

"I am delighted that so many people came along to help thank those heroes who have served in the past and the men and women who currently in service at home and abroad today."

He added as many as 2,000 people had attended the event and there had been particularly large numbers of young people.

"Young people are key to these services," he explained.

"Each year we see more and more whether that be as members of the cadets or members of the public."

"It is so important they are educated and they remember the sacrifices made so they do not make the same mistakes as previous generations perhaps did."

Yesterday (Wednesday) veterans were joining councillors and members of the public at the Clock Tower, Priory Street, for the annual Armistice Day service to mark the end of the First World War.



Some of the many crosses of remembrance outside Dudley Council House



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Sandwell remembers at ceremony for all ages

HUNDREDS of people turned out across Sandwell borough to pay tribute to members of the armed forces killed in conflicts.

Families from across the borough gathered at war memorials across towns and villages to pay tribute to those who have served the country in the armed forces and paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

At Oldbury hundreds crowded around the town's war memorial and looked on as veterans and cadets paraded outside the council house.

The wind and the birds were all that could be heard as a two-minute silence was impeccably observed.

There were other poignant moments as both hymns and the national anthem were sung with pride, and as the Last Post rang out.

Grow

David Williams, President of the Oldbury branch of the Royal British Legion, said the turnout continues to grow year on year.

He added: "Every year it always amazes me the numbers of people who come to the service, and there is more and more each time."

"We see the same faces, just a little older each year, and then younger ones who have come as well with their families."

"I am an ex-serviceman and all of us feel as if we are part of one big family. "It is really nice to be with members of the public too. I am elated," he added.

Friends and family met by the memorial and the sun broke through the clouds as the service began shortly before 11am. Several people took the opportunity to lay wreaths at the base of the memorial.



Wreaths are laid at the cenotaph in Oldbury town centre on Remembrance Sunday



Young and old ready to lay their wreaths at the cenotaph in Oldbury town centre

Among them was Alan Clarke and his two sons, nine-year-old Jacob and seven-year-old Oliver.

He said afterwards: "It is really nice and very important to remember the sacrifices that have been made for us here today in all the conflicts gone by."

"But there are also lads and ladies still making that sacrifice and they too are in our thoughts."

At the same time the Queen was leading the nation in remembrance in London, Remembrance Sunday was observed across the borough including services in Tipton, Rowley Regis, Wednesbury, Smethwick and West Bromwich, Great Barr. Services were held across the Black Country, including in Dudley town centre (see page opposite).



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EofE rockers are kings of the castle



Dudley's rising stars EofE, from left, Dan Bremner, Reece Luke, Tom Harris, Luke Bradley and Nicky Waters

THEY have been performing to thousands of fans on tours with McBusted and The Vamps.

But Dudley boyband EofE are now hoping their debut album will take them to the top of the bill.

Following a 32-date sell out arena tour with supergroup McBusted in 2014, and a support slot with teen favourites The Vamps, EofE are now keen to conquer in their own right

Tom Harris, Dan Bremner, Luke Bradley, Nicky Waters and more recent recruit Reece Luke say the album swiftly came together after touring, and that their sound has now matured.

Mixing rock and pop, the band have already drawn attention from rock music magazine Kerrang! and leading music app Spotify.

Reece, aged 22, said: "We know what our strengths are now and our sound has matured, there's no doubt about it."

"We've been a five piece for just under a year, and sometimes it takes members a lot of time to gel together to create music, but with us it just came together really quickly."

EofE, whose name is taken from the James Dean film East of Eden, first formed in 2012 after guitarist Dan and

bassist Luke attended Ellowes Hall School in Gornal.

The band, pictured during a visit to Dudley Castle in their home town, say that they are proud of their self-titled debut.

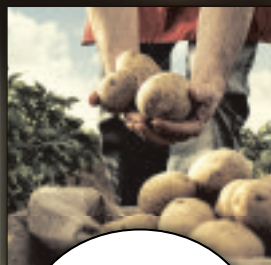
Singer Tom, aged 18, explained: "All we ever wanted to do was write and play, I don't think any of us set out to make money, yet now our hobby has turned into our career."

EofE can be followed on Facebook at [facebook.com/eofeofficial](https://www.facebook.com/eofeofficial)

They will be next playing locally at Stourbridge's River Rooms, in Mill Race Lane, on December 3.

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Criticism for council's £6.5m agency staff bill

Driver had to be cut free



The car left hanging in a tree after the accident in Cradley from which the driver had to be rescued and taken to hospital in Birmingham

A MAN had to be cut free after a car crashed and was left hanging in a tree in the Black Country.

Two other men also received facial and back injuries when the vehicle crashed into a metal fence outside a football training facility in Park Road, Cradley.

The driver, aged in his 30s, was trapped under in the wreckage and had to be cut free by West Midlands Fire Service. He complained of severe back pain and was taken to Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Claire Brown, of West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesperson,

said: "Emergency services arrived to find a car had left the road, gone through a metal fence and came to rest in a tree on the other side of a wall. The two passengers, both men believed to be in their 20s to 30s, had got out of the car and had suffered relatively minor injuries.

"One had a facial injury which required some dressings on scene before both were taken to Russells Hall Hospital. The driver, a man in his 30s, was trapped in the wreckage."

The accident happened at around 12.40am on Saturday.

CASH-STRAPPED Dudley Council spent £6.5 million on agency staff last year, it has been revealed.

It comes as the authority is proposing to shut the town's museum and art gallery and axe up to 275 jobs in order to save £20m.

Bosses insisted the appointment of temporary staff was necessary to ensure roles were not left vacant.

UKIP councillor Bill Etheridge said: "The fact that Dudley Council is spending millions on temporary and agency staff, when it has announced plans to close the museum and art gallery, shows poor planning and recruitment policies on their part."

The authority has come under fire after revealing drastic cuts for the next three years which will see the museum and art gallery on Priory Street close and opening hours reduced at libraries and the Red House Glass Cone in Wordsley.

UKIP councillor Paul Brothwood told the council's cabinet: "Most of the cuts seems to be to frontline services, which is surprising to see when the council has spent nearly £7 million on agency staff."

"We should be focusing on cuts to agency staff as opposed to frontline services."

Practical

Expenditure on agency staff in 2014/15 fell slightly from £6.6m the previous year.

Deputy leader Judy Foster said: "There are a number of practical business reasons why Dudley Council employs agency and interim staff. Reasons include that key positions and statutory posts cannot remain vacant as they would put the authority in breach of its statutory responsibilities and deprive Dudley residents of the important services they need.

"We continue with our efforts to recruit permanent members of staff to these key positions, and if we are unable to find people suitable to fill them permanently they are being filled on a temporary basis."

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Teenage traders are in the market for success

A NEW market run solely by teenagers has been launched in Dudley town centre – with organisers hailing the first event a huge success.

Stallholders sold a variety of wares at the market held in Stone Street earlier this month.

Musicians were also given the opportunity to show what they could do, with lives music providing the backdrop during the event.

The 25-stall market was launched by Dudley Council in an attempt to give young people the opportunity to gain valuable experience and showcase their skills.

Ivy Garratt seized the chance to sell some unwanted items from home, including shoes and bags, with the day proving to be a huge success. The 19-year-old from Dudley is eyeing a future in customer services and said it was a great opportunity to improve her people skills. She said: “My mum saw it on Facebook and asked me and my sister if we wanted to do it. We have both worked in retail but this is more about communication.

“We’ve had to go back home and get two more lots of stock because we sold it all. It’s good practice for the real world. It’s a really good opportunity for teenagers. Dudley teenagers seem to be viewed as the worst thing in the world but this shows we’re not all bad and that we’ve got aspirations and dreams.”

Friends Molly Shaw and Amy Norris took up a stall so they could raise cash for their African adventure next year. They each need to raise £2,000 to fund a conservation experience trip to the Kruger National Park, in South Africa, where they will learn about wildlife conservation.



Musician Shannon Wheatley, aged 17, of Upper Gornal, performed at The Teenage Market in Dudley

Oscar winner plans an Arena concert

HE’S the maestro behind iconic movie soundtracks including Gladiator and The Dark Knight.

And now Oscar-winning film composer, Hans Zimmer will be bringing his music to Birmingham in one of only two UK shows.

Zimmer’s CV is a compendium of top Hollywood films with the German-born musician composing the soundtracks to blockbusters such as Inception, Interstellar, 12 Years a Slave, The Pirates of the Caribbean series, and The Dark Knight trilogy.

The Da Vinci Code, Mission Impossible, Guy Ritchie’s Sherlock Holmes, Thelma And Louise, Crimson Tide, and Rain Man are also on his impressive list of 100 film scores.

During the tour, his 20-piece studio band, with whom he records his award-winning soundtracks, will be appearing alongside Lebo M, best known for his stunning vocals on Zimmer’s Oscar-winning score for Disney’s The Lion King.

There will be an orchestra and choir with over 70 musicians on stage at the Barclaycard Arena on April 12.

More than a quarter below the living wage

MORE than a quarter of workers in the Black Country and Staffordshire earn below the living wage, new figures show, with the figure rising close to 30 per cent in some areas.

The voluntary living wage, as promoted by the Living Wage Foundation campaign group, has increased by 40p per hour to £8.25 per hour.

More than 2,000 accredited employers have agreed to pay it, including Lloyds Banking Group, Barclays, Unilever and Richer Sounds. The figure is higher than the current national minimum wage of £6.70 per hour, and the Government’s pending National Living Wage for those aged 25 and over of £7.20 per hour, from April.

Although the increase means a pay rise for staff working at employers signed up to the living wage, across the Black Country and Staffordshire 167,000 workers earn less than the old rate of £7.85 per hour.

By Peter Madeley

“There has been an increase in the number of employers who are paying the living wage and this has to be welcomed. It will make a significant difference to hundreds of people’s lives.

“What we now need to see is more employers signing up to the voluntary living wage rather than paying the fake living wage that George Osborne has announced.”

Injustice

Commenting on the increased rate of £8.25 per hour, Sarah Vero, director at the Living Wage Foundation said: “We are celebrating those 2,000 responsible businesses that are voluntarily paying the living wage to their staff.

“These employers are not waiting for Government to tell them what to do. Their actions are helping to end the injustice that is in-work poverty in the UK now.”

As with the government’s minimum wage, employers have six months to bring in the new pay level. The living wage is an informal benchmark, and is not a legally enforceable minimum.

Six Million Dollar Man at NEC event

TELEVISION’S Six Million Dollar Man will be visiting the MCM Comic Con event taking place at Birmingham’s National Exhibition Centre later this month.

Lee Majors, who played the bionically-enhanced Steve Austin, will be among the stars attending the event on November 21 and 22.

He will be meeting fans and signing autographs on both days of the NEC event.

The 75-year-old actor starred in the The Six Million Dollar Man series from 1973 to 1978 and then in The Fall Guy from 1981 to 1986.

The Six Million Dollar Man followed the adventures of Colonel Steve Austin, who gains superhuman strength, speed and vision after being ‘rebuilt’ with bionic implants following a ‘plane crash.

Comic Con Birmingham will also feature memorabilia from films and TV shows, comics, toys and clothing.



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Black Country sporting heroes honoured at glitzy prize night

IT WAS the night that local sporting heroes went from grassroots to glamour as achievements were honoured at the annual Black Country Sport and Physical Activity Awards.

The inspirational ceremony, organised by the Black Country BeActive, saw athletes, coaches and volunteers at Wolverhampton's Ramada Park Hall Hotel to celebrate in style.

Halesowen's wheelchair tennis Paralympic champion, Jordanne Whitley, scored in two of the categories, picking up Disabled Sportsperson of the Year and Sportsperson of the Year. Her mother Julie received the awards on her behalf whilst she competes in California.

A video message was played out from Jordanne, who was awarded an MBE last month after winning two grand slam doubles titles in the summer and her first grand slam single title in the US Open just weeks before.

"I just wanted to say thanks so much for both of the awards," she said on a big screen.

Double
It was a double celebration for Jordanne who also scooped the Sky Disability Sportswoman of the Year prize at a separate awards evening.

One of Britain's greatest cyclists, Hugh Porter MBE, was present to receive the Elvis Gordon Chair's Recognition Award for his outstanding contribution to both sport and the Black Country.

Six-time gold medal winning Paralympic athlete, David Weir, was guest speaker for the evening.

Winners in other categories included Corey Clarke for Newcomer of the Year, Richard Newell for Community Coach of the Year and Darlaston FC's Gilbert Preece, aged 72, for Unsung Hero.

Sadness as church trees must go



Rev Simon Falshaw between the two beech trees, believed to be a century old, which are being felled

CONTROVERSIAL plans to fell two beech trees in a Lye churchyard have been given the go-ahead by a Church of England judge because of damage being caused by their roots.

Despite a petition to save the trees in the yard at Christ Church, Charles Mynors, Chancellor of the Diocese of Worcestershire and a judge of the Church's Consistory Court, has given

the green light for the trees to go.

This decision flew in the face of opposition from residents and the Parochial Church Council.

Rev Simon Falshaw, the vicar for Lye, said: "They're old trees – maybe 100 years old – and it's a sad day for the local community that they're being felled."

In a 2,500-word judgment Chancel-

lor Mynors admitted the trees were 'extremely attractive', agreeing with residents they provided 'a lovely green spot in an otherwise busy High Street environment' – but had to be felled regardless.

The application for permission to fell them was made by Dudley Council, after subsidence damage to nearby buildings caused by the trees' roots.

Dynamo will bring first live show to arena

TV MAGICIAN Dynamo is bringing his Seeing Is Believing show to Birmingham's Barclaycard Arena for five consecutive nights next month.

The hip street magician, whose stunts have included walking on water on the River Thames and levitating above London skyscraper The Shard, opened his tour in Manchester last month after announcing his last series of Dynamo: Magician Impossible for TV channel Watch.

Dynamo, real name Steven Frayne, hit screens just three years ago with his first series of Magician Impossible and has quickly established himself as one of the world's best known magicians, with his series airing in over 180 countries reaching over 250 million viewers.

Challenge

He was recently awarded the high-est accolade by the Magic Circle with promotion to Member of the Inner Magic Circle with Gold Star.

Dynamo says: "I was ready for a new challenge and for a long time I have wanted to take my show to the stage. I am hoping that like I did for magic on TV, I can reinvent the live magic show and produce something fans have never seen before."

Dynamo will be in Birmingham from December 9 to 13. Tickets start from £37.25. Call 0844 338 8000.

Councillors looking at plan for eight homes

EIGHT homes will be built along a main road in Dudley, under plans lodged with Dudley Council.

KP Properties has submitted plans to build the homes along Stourbridge Road, near the Scotts Green Island.

Parking would be provided to the side of the semi-detached properties, should they be given the go-ahead.

Dudley Council is expected to make a decision on the plans sometime over the next few weeks.

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Concert hall full for Poppy concert

A CONCERT honouring those who gave their lives in conflicts struck the right note with music lovers packing out Dudley Town Hall for the charity event.

The Gentleman Songsters Male Voice Choir staged its annual Festival of Remembrance concert in Dudley to raise funds for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

Concert-goers packed into the town hall, in St James's Road, for the event which also featured Sovereign Brass, Bridgnorth Ukulele Band and compere Marlene.

A highlight was the traditional poppy drop, where petals are dropped from the ceiling commemorating those from the town who have died fighting for their country.

Chairman of the Gentlemen Songsters Keith Moss said: "It was a wonderful event and the turn-out was excellent. It allowed people to pay their respects to those who gave their lives in conflicts while enjoying an evening of music at the same time."



Chris Hales and Rachael Rothero congratulated by children Lauren, Alexis, Scarlet and cousin Summer

25,000 see Chris pop the question at fireworks show

SHE was meant to be going to the darts but instead Rachael Rothero got a marriage proposal at Dudley's big fireworks display at Himley Park in front of 25,000 people.

Boyfriend Chris Laws popped the question on the Heart FM stage on Saturday night as delighted spectators held up mobile phone torches to create some mood magic.

Rachael, 34, was lured on to the stage with a story that the couple's children had won prizes. But Chris, a 35-year-old sales account manager, got down on one knee and happily Rachael accepted.

Afterwards she said: "I had no idea until the last minute what was

going on. I was in absolute shock, my legs turned to jelly. It was the perfect place for it to happen."

Chris was contacted by the radio station last week after he liked a Facebook page they had set up looking for a likely Romeo - or Juliet - to propose to their other half.

The couple, who have three children between them - Lauren, aged 11, eight-year-old Alexis, and Scarlet, three - have been going out for two years.

The couple had meant to be going to the Grand Slam of Darts at Wolverhampton's Civic Hall on Saturday but Chris managed to convince Rachael to change their plans.

Row over goggles ban for school swimmers

A PRIMARY school has banned pupils from wearing goggles in swimming lessons because it says they don't prepare youngsters for 'emergency water situations'.

Christ Church School in Coseley refuses to allow youngsters to wear goggles unless they are worn for medical reasons.

The move has been slammed as 'ridiculous' by parents and branded 'a load of b*****' by a councillor.

Parents who want their children to wear goggles have to produce a doctor's note. The school has defended its policy, claiming it is following national guidelines.

The school runs lessons for pupils at Tipton Leisure Centre.

Lisa Fellows said she has stopped her eight-year-old son Klay from participating in lessons as a result of the ruling.

"If he doesn't wear goggles his eyes become red and start to water," said Mrs Fellows, aged 42, from Coseley.

"He loves swimming and it has broken his heart that the school won't let him in the pool if he wears them. The excuse they are giving is ridiculous. It's as if they are saying children can't swim properly if they have got goggles on."

Olympic

Councillor Star Anderson, who represents Coseley East for UKIP, said: "If goggles are good enough for our Olympic swimmers then why should our children not be allowed to wear them?"

"I can't for the life of me think why the school would make this decision. They are supposed to be teaching children how to swim not pushing them away by bringing in nonsensical rules."

"It's a load of b*****. Parents will understandably be furious."

Dudley Council spokesman Chris Howes said the authority allowed individual schools to make decisions over eyewear during swimming lessons.



Swimmer Klay Fellows

Tipton Leisure Centre chief duty manager Ian Thomas said the centre had no policy in place preventing pupils from wearing goggles in its pool.

"We have several schools that use our centre that allow goggles," he added.

Sarah Riley, headteacher at the Outstanding-rated school in Church Road, said: "Swimming is a big part of our curriculum and a life skill we take very seriously."

"National guidelines discourage children from wearing goggles to prepare them for emergency water situations, something we support in school."

"But we have no intention of banning any child from wearing goggles if there is a reason to wear them, and we do have some children who wear goggles in swimming lessons."

"A recent letter to parents said very clearly that any parents who wanted to discuss this matter should come and see me. My door is always open to parents on any school issues to make sure they have the right information."

Lights action at village

PEOPLE living in Wall Heath are gearing up for their big Christmas lights switch-on later this month.

There will be plenty of entertainment in the village on November 29, including a mini funfair, Santa's grotto and snow machine, in High Street. The Kingswinford Male Voice Choir will also be performing at the event organised by Wall Heath Village People. The switch on is at 4pm.

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Brave Man Will is giving 100 per cent

REVIEW

by Leon Burakowski

POP idol, clown prince and sweet soul singer – all these titles are appropriate for Will Young, back with his first tour in four years.

The well-spoken lad from Berkshire was the first in the Simon Cowell era of TV talent show successes.

It's no secret that Cowell wanted his rival Gareth Gates to win TV's Pop Idol show, especially after Young famously gave the music and media mogul an eloquent rebuke on TV.

Fourteen years on, with a new record label deal and recovered from a breakdown, and established as a stage and screen actor, Young is back in the chart with sixth album 85% Proof and was giving his faithful fans in Birmingham 100 per cent entertainment.

Wearing a black trouser suit with baggy culottes but no sleeves, which simultaneously suggested Catholic priest and northern soul dancer, the 36-year-old launched his 90-minute set with Brave Man, singing into a paper blizzard which set the theatrical tone.

Backed by a five-piece band and an exceptional trio of backing singers, the singer took his music seriously but sent himself up something rotten.

His quirky humour was apparent in ramblings about Pudsey Bear and Strictly Come Dancing, cheeky banter with the audience and a photo backdrop that made him look like an evangelical preacher.

We also got good Will hunting the groove, bringing the funk for his Justin Timberlake-like U Think I'm Sexy and blending Your Game with his version of Donna Summer's Love To Love You Baby.



Will Young delighted his fans at Symphony Hall last week and returns on Monday

He also turned back the clock to the beginning of his career with his jazzy take on The Doors' Light My Fire.

He turned up the heat with his rockiest number Switch It On, followed by the hits Grace and Jealousy, the latter finally getting all the audience out of their seats and into dance mode.

It says something for the strength of his latest album that two out of three of the encores were plucked from it, the up-tempo retro soul of Love Revolution and the aptly named anthem The Letter.

He ended with the hit that really established him as a serious artist, fans' favourite Leave Right Now.

But he will be back at the Symphony Hall on Monday, November 16.

It will be worth turning up early for the support slot from London soul singer Lemar.

He impressed before Young's set on Wednesday with bare bones acoustic versions of his 10-year-old hits, including If There's Any Justice, and classic soul covers from new album The Letter.



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A picture of the 1772 canal bridge, seen from the new bridge, as it was 110 years ago



Joey Brew holding the jigsaw below the bridge it depicts



Barry Freeman's painting End of an Era, featuring the Defiant locomotive



The 'Meccano' bridge under construction 100 years ago



The coal yard at Newbridge, by the old canal bridge

Centre puts pieces together to bridge gap from end of an era

IN the summer of 1947, the Great Western Railway Castle Class locomotive Defiant hauled a passenger train from Tettenhall Station, crossing the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal on the Warren Truss girder bridge.

Always known locally as the Meccano Bridge, it was only 400 yards beyond the station, with private, working narrowboats hauling loads on the waterway beneath.

This really was heading towards the end of an era, because on January 1, 1948 the railways and the waterways were nationalised.

It was the end of an era in another sense, as the very last flights of any Defiant aircraft, after which the locomotive was named, were made at this time from Penfold airfield, only half a mile away, where Boulton Paul still used one of two for development work.

MEMORY LANE

By Alec Brew

The Tettenhall Transport Heritage Centre – based near the canal at the Smestow Valley local nature reserve – discovered that a marvellous painting depicting the historic scene, painted by local artist, Barry Freeman had been made into a 1000 piece jigsaw puzzle.

Immediately they secured a stock for sale in their shop, ready for Christmas, and to publicise its existence to locals who know the Meccano bridge so well. The Meccano Bridge now carries the Smestow Valley foot/cycle path across the canal.

It was built a hundred years ago to carry what was built as the Wolverhampton to Bridgnorth Railway, though the branch from Wombourne to Bridgnorth was never actually completed.

The next bridge over the canal to the East was built, along with the canal, in 1772, to

carry the London to Holyhead Road, and alongside that, as at most canal/road junctions in the town, there was a coal yard, on the site of the current MS Centre.

Right next to the 1772 bridge is the New Bridge, carrying Thomas Telford's road below The Rock.

However the bridge carrying the road now, is not Telford's bridge, which gave the area its name, because that was knocked down in 1930, along with the Newbridge pub which was built on the end of it, and was replaced with the bridge we have today, a new Newbridge pub being built over the road.

A little nearer the Rock yet another bridge carries the Tettenhall road over the old railway line as well, and yet such is the design of the main road, many people driving along it each day would struggle to realise what a cluster of bridges there are.

The Heritage Centre, at Tettenhall Station is open every Sunday, and makes a perfect place to explore these local history gems.



Alec Brew seen inside the centre

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Theatre Showstopper from £239.⁹⁵

This popular theatre package to the West End departs from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton on the Friday morning returning on the Sunday afternoon/early evening.

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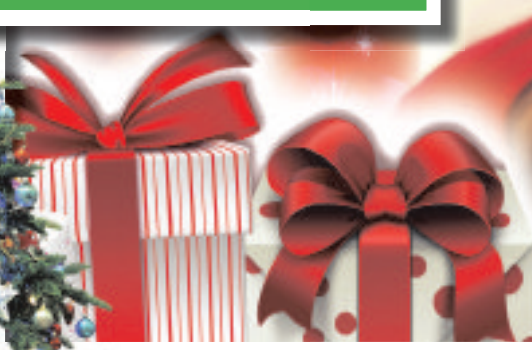
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Blooming great work rewarded

ADVERTISING FEATURE

RETAILERS have praised the team behind Halesowen In Bloom for their sterling efforts throughout the year.

The In Bloom team struck gold in the regional contest and as well as praise from judges, they were congratulated by the businessmen and women from Halesowen Chamber of Trade and Commerce. Judges lauded the team for their good work following a visit at the height of the competition back in July. The results were announced during a ceremony held in Rugby.

Among the recognition given out, was praise for the leadership and hard work demonstrated by Eve O'Connor, chairman of the project. She was described by judge Graham Redfern as the driving force behind the campaign. He and fellow judge Tim Oakes were clearly impressed with the town's efforts. Mr Redfern said at the time that the town had made "great progress" adding: "I can see the improvements that have been made from last year."

"Most of the things suggested have been taken on board," he said. "I am sure Halesowen will be beacon in the Midlands for the Heart of England In Bloom."

Mrs O'Connor thanked all those that had contributed in any way to the group's success, adding none of it would have been possible without their efforts. A tea party was even held to say thank you for the volunteers' work at St John the Baptist Church in the town.



Front, Halesowen In Bloom chairman Eve O'Connor, with her merit award, volunteer Amanda Hodgetts and committee member Steve Fitzpatrick

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Making a BID for improved facilities

ADVERTISING FEATURE

EXCITING times lay ahead for Halesowen town centre as the Chamber of Trade is currently in negotiation with Dudley Council to test the viability of a Business Improvement District, otherwise known as a BID.

BID gives power to businesses and the Chamber to introduce and finance improvements to the town's trading facilities, like improving the shopping and business environment, resulting in cleaner, safer streets, more attractive displays, encouragement of new businesses and helping them to become established on a long-term basis.

Alongside the BID there are already changes in the pipeline, including the recently agreed provision for 35 additional free parking places.

Window

These will provide 45 minutes of short term parking for shoppers and other visitors needing to make a quick stop to the town centre. For more information, call Chamber of Trade chairman Wayne Edwards on 07903 315 053.

Meanwhile, a new community website for Halesowen has been launched. It can be found at www.halesowen-towncentre.co.uk and has been described as the 'shop window' to show the best that Halesowen has to offer.

It aims to attract new visitors and welcome back locals to the shops, cafes and restaurants. The operators are looking to include every business in the



Improvements could be made to Halesowen's thriving market town

town and create a real community feel.

As part of the launch, the Chamber is encouraging all local businesses to get involved by being listed on the site. Basic membership for local traders is free and will help all visitors discover what attractions and services are available in the town.

Chamber of Trade chairman Wayne Edwards said: "If Halesowen's residents continue to support local business, we can really get the West Midlands economy moving again and creating more jobs for local people. It's something we're truly passionate

about." Alongside the new website, the Chamber has also launched a newsletter to publish updates and upcoming events with its members.

This is to help local businesses feel a part of the community and to take advantage of the special events such as the Christmas lights switch-on on November 21.

Businesses are urged to make sure they are included at www.halesowen-towncentre.co.uk and are also encouraged to support the site on Twitter: @HalesowenT and on Facebook: halesowentowncentre

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Angel D'Light was among those entertaining the crowds at last year's event



The 2014 lights are turned on by Santa, MP James Morris and Councillor Steve Waltho

Lighting up for Christmas

ADVERTISING FEATURE

HALESOWEN gets into the festive spirit next weekend with its annual Christmas lights switch-on.

There will be more lights than ever at the Saturday, November 21 event, thanks to sponsorship from businesses after an appeal was put out to help fund the cost of the £13,000 display.

Businesses in the town are now urging shoppers and residents to join them as they spread some seasonal cheer and make Halesowen Town a place of joy and celebration.

Last year's event attracted 43,000 visitors in one day to the town centre.

The town will be packed with a full entertainment programme starting from 11am, all the way through until the big switch-on at 5.30pm.

Shops throughout the town will be able to enable shoppers to pick up their Christmas gifts.

Spectacular

"Halesowen Town Centre is a place for people to come and enjoy the festive season which will be packed with a full entertainment programme," said a spokesman for Halesowen Chamber of Trade, which has organised the spectacular and had pledged to offer something for everyone.

"Get ready for a true Christmas extravaganza with fire-eaters to warm up the place, and angle grinders to get the adrenaline going, all overlooked by a daring stilt walker."

To truly appreciate the festive atmosphere, there will be a state-of-the-art LED show from a towering nine foot Christmas party robot. He may even dance with lucky revellers while DJ Porky plays his modern tunes.

The streets will be full of live entertainment, a Christmas market and a giant fun fair, while Halesowen & Rowley Regis Rotary will be there with Father Christmas and his sleigh. Children can go along to get their face painted or have their picture taken with Santa and his elves.



A snowy scene from the 2014 Halesowen lights switch-on



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Wolverhampton gig
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Page 25



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 The Institute, Digbeth, Birmingham, B5 6DY. Call 0121 643 0428

Dressed To Kill: KISS Tribute
 Fri at 7.30pm, £12 - £14
 The Robin 2, Bilston, WV14 7LJ. Call 01902 401211

Jimmy Buckley
 Sun at 7.30pm, £20
 Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock, WS11 1DE. Call 01543 578762

Will Young: Love Revolution
 Mon at 7.30pm, £35 - £45
 Symphony Hall, Birmingham, B1 2EA. Call 0121 780 3333

Frank Turner And The Sleeping Souls
 Wed at 7pm, £25
 O2 Academy Birmingham, B1 1DB. Call 0121 622 8250

The Vaccines
 Tue at 7pm, £25
 Wolverhampton Civic Hall, WV1 1RQ. 0870 320 7000

Kelly Clarkson
 Sat at 6pm, £30.20 - £40.20
 Genting Arena, Birmingham, B40 1NT. Call 0121 780 4141

The Straight Aces
 Sat at 12am,
 Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge, DY8 3TB. Call 01384 374410

Everything Everything
 Sat at 7pm, £17.50
 O2 Academy Birmingham, B1 1DB. Call 0121 622 8250

Cherie Currie
 Tue at 8.30pm, £15
 The Robin 2, Bilston, WV14 7LJ. Call 01902 401211

The ELO Experience: ELO Tribute
 Fri at 7.30pm,
 Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock, WS11 1DE. Call 01543 578762

Hiddens Charms
 Thu at 7pm - 10pm,
 The River Rooms, Stourbridge, DY8 1JN. Call 01384 397177

Steve Harley & Cockney Rebel
 Tue at 7.30pm, £36
 Symphony Hall, Birmingham, B1 2EA. Call 0121 780 3333

Black Volvo
 Fri - Sat at 8pm - 1am,
 The Boars Head, Kidderminster, DY10 1EW. Call 01562 861870

Buddy Holly And The Crickets
 Fri at 7.30pm, £17.50
 Lichfield Garrick, WS13 6HR. Call 01543 412121

UK Salutes Frank: Frank Sinatra Tribute
 Sat at 7.30pm,
 Lichfield Garrick, WS13 6HR. Call 01543 412121

Barry Steele: Roy Orbison Tribute
 Sat at 7.30pm,
 Palace Theatre, Redditch, B98 8AE. Call 01527 65203

The Jellycats
 Sat - Sun at 8pm - 1am,
 The Boars Head, Kidderminster, DY10 1EW. Call 01562 861870

The Phonics: The Stereophonics Tribute
 Fri at 7.30pm, £8
 The River Rooms, Stourbridge, DY8 1JN. Call 01384 397177

The Quireboys
 Thu at 7pm, £15
 Wolverhampton Slade Rooms, WV1 1RQ. 0870 320 7000

Cast
 Sat at 7pm, £19.25
 Wolverhampton Slade Rooms, WV1 1RQ. 0870 320 7000

Pat Travers Band
 Wed at 7.30pm, £15 - £16
 The Robin 2, Bilston, WV14 7LJ. Call 01902 401211

The Naked Beatles: Beatles Tribute
 Sat at 7.30pm, £8
 The River Rooms, Stourbridge, DY8 1JN. Call 01384 397177

Glitz, Blitz & 70s Hitz
Starring Sweet, Mud 2 And The Rubettes 2015
 Fri at 8pm - 10pm, £32.50
 Birmingham Town Hall, B3 3DQ. Call 0121 780 3333

Queen Extravaganza: 40th Anniversary Of A Night At The Opera
 Mon at 8pm - 10.30pm, £24.50
 Birmingham Town Hall, B3 3DQ. Call 0121 780 3333

Are You Experienced?: Jimi Hendrix Tribute
 Fri at 10pm, £3 - £5
 The Grapes, Stafford, ST16 2HZ. Call 07989 174631

JAZZ & BLUES

Chris Aldridge And Beebe
 Tue at 8pm,
 The Jam House, Birmingham, B31QU. Call 0121 200 3030

BabaJACK
 Fri at 7.45pm, £10 - £12
 Palace Theatre, Redditch, B98 8AE. Call 01527 65203

Blind Boy Paxton
 Mon at 7.30pm - 10.30pm,
 Kitchen Garden Cafe, King's Heath, Birmingham, B14 7SA. Call 0121 443 4725

Adrian Styles and The Giants
 Sun at 9pm, Free
 The Grapes, Stafford, ST16 2HZ. Call 07989 174631

FOLK & ACOUSTIC

Foster And Allen
 Sat at 7.30pm,
 Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock, WS11 1DE. Call 01543 578762

Steeleye Span
 Thu at 7.30pm, £2
 £19.50 - £22.50
 Birmingham Town Hall, B3 3DQ. Call 0121 780 3333

Open Mic Night
 Mon at 8.30pm, Free
 Katie Fitzgerald's, Wollaston, Stourbridge, DY8 3TB. Call 01384 374410

Country Music Night
 Sun at 8.15pm, £2
 The Swan With 2 necks Longdon, WS15 4PN

CLASSICAL & OTHER MUSIC

Maria Schneider Orchestra
 Thu at 8pm, £10 - £25
 Symphony Hall, Birmingham, B1 2EA. Call 0121 780 3333

Nick Ross Orchestra: Sounds Of The Glenn Miller Era
 Sun at 7.30pm,
 Lichfield Garrick, WS13 6HR. Call 01543 412121

Central England Ensemble
 Sun at 7pm,
 Birmingham Conservatoire, Birmingham City University, B3 3HG. Call 0121 331 5901

CBSO 2015-16: Tchaikovsky's Fourth
 Wed at 2.15pm, £12.50 - £43
 Symphony Hall, Birmingham, B1 2EA. Call 0121 780 3333

Spectacular Classics
 Sat at 2.30pm, 7.30pm, £16.50 - £44.50
 Symphony Hall, Birmingham, B1 2EA. Call 0121 780 3333

The RAF In Concert 2015
 Sun at 7.30pm, £19 - £25
 Symphony Hall, Birmingham, B1 2EA. Call 0121 780 3333

Welsh National Opera: Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street
 Thu at 7.15pm, from £11.50
 Birmingham Hippodrome, B5 4TB. Call 0844 338 5000

Welsh National Opera: Orlando
 Wed at 7.15pm, from £11.50
 Birmingham Hippodrome, B5 4TB. Call 0844 338 5000

Welsh National Opera: I Puritani
 Tue at 7.15pm, from £11.50
 Birmingham Hippodrome, B5 4TB. Call 0844 338 5000

THEATRE

Diversity
 Fri at 7pm, Sat at 1pm, 7pm, Sun at 1pm,
 New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, B5 4DS. Call 0844 871 3011

Shakespeare Schools Festival 2015
 Mon at 7pm,
 Lichfield Garrick, WS13 6HR. Call 01543 412121

Contained
 Thu at 7.30pm,
 Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SE. Call 01902 321321

Old Haunts
 Fri at 7.30pm,
 Lichfield Garrick, WS13 6HR. Call 01543 412121

Glorilla
 Sat at 7.30pm,
 Artrix, Bromsgrove, B61 1PQ. Call 01527 577330

The Lion The Witch And The Wardrobe
 Thu at 7pm, £7.50 - £35
 Birmingham Repertory Theatre, B1 2EP. Call 0121 236 4455

Calamity Jane: Redditch Operatic Society
 Tue at 7.30pm, Wed at 7.30pm,
 Thu at 7.30pm,
 Palace Theatre, Redditch, B98 8AE. Call 01527 65203

The Holy & Horny Farewell Tour
 Sat at 7.30pm, £10.50 - £12.50
 Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, WV1 4AN. Call 01902 572090

Last Night A DJ Saved My Life
 Tue at 7.30pm, Wed at 7.30pm,
 Thu at 7.30pm, £17 - £54.14
 Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, WV1 1DE. Call 01902 573320

The Little Match Girl
 Sat at 2pm, 7pm, £8 - £12
 Birmingham Hippodrome, B5 4TB. Call 0844 338 5000

Hairspray: Bilston Operatic Company
 Fri at 7.30pm, Sat at 2.30pm, 7.30pm, £8.50 - £19
 Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, WV1 1DE. Call 01902 573320

Dark And Lovely
 Fri at 8pm, Sat at 2.30pm, 8pm, £10 - £13
 Birmingham Repertory Theatre, B1 2EP. Call 0121 236 4455

COMEDY

Sean McLoughlin: Whatever It Takes
 Fri at 8pm, £11
 Wolverhampton Slade Rooms, WV1 1RQ. 0870 320 7000

Roy Chubby Brown
 Sat at 7.30pm, £20 - £21
 Kidderminster Town Hall, DY10 1DB. 01562 732158

Dara O Briain: Crowd Ticker
 Fri at 8pm - 10pm, Sat at 8pm - 10pm, £23
 Birmingham Hippodrome, B5 4TB. Call 0844 338 5000

Hardeep Singh Kohli: Big Mouth Strikes Again
 Sat at 8pm, £13 - £14
 mac, Cannon Hill Road, Birmingham, B12 9QH. Call 0121 446 3232

Pam Ann: Queen Of The Sky
 Thu at 8pm - 10pm, £24.90 - £30.90
 New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, B5 4DS. Call 0844 871 3011

Bill Bailey: Limboland
 Wed at 7pm, Thu at 7pm, £25 - £28.82
 Wolverhampton Civic Hall, WV1 1RQ. Call 0870 320 7000

Comedy 42
 Sat at 7.30pm,
 Lichfield Garrick, WS13 6HR. Call 01543 412121

Check out full listings in **the ticket** in Friday's Express & Star

Vaccines ready to rock the Civic

MILLION record selling rockers The Vaccines kick-off their biggest UK tour to date with a gig at Wolverhampton Civic Hall on Tuesday.

The indie band from London released their third album, *English Graffiti*, in May and have recently released *Give Me A Sign* as a single accompanied by a video inspired by spoof rock documentary *Spinal Tap*.

The outfit fronted by Southampton-born singer and guitarist Justin Young have toured the world with The Rolling Stones, Muse, Arctic Monkeys and Red Hot Chili Peppers, and performed at several major festivals over the summer including Glastonbury, Latitude and T in the Park. This week they are touring Australian stadia with Mumford And Sons.

Turn up early to catch Lambeth's raucous Palma Violets, who should get the Civic warmed up nicely.

Other gigs worth braving the November chill for: Liverpool's Cast are back with a new song *Baby Blue Eyes* and a gig for Britpop connoisseurs at Wolverhampton's Slade Rooms on Saturday. That's the same night inspired English art pop outfit Everything Everything, featuring the rapid-fire vocals of Jonathan Higgs, are at Brum's O2 Academy.

Former Public Image Ltd bassist Jah Wobble brings his Invaders Of The Heart to the Robin 2 in Bilston tonight (Thu). The same venue hosts Brit soul legends The Real Thing on Saturday, former members of Captain Beefheart's The Magic Band on Monday and on Tuesday Cherie Currie from US punk legends The Run-



The Vaccines with Palma Violets could be a gig of the year contender

aways. The Cherry Bomb singer is coming to the Black Country venue as part of her first UK tour in 35 years.

And a heads-up to the Tartan Army of 50something former teenyboppers, Les McKeown brings his Bay City Rollers to the Robin 2 next Thursday, November 19, for a night of Shang-

A-Lang and Bye Bye Baby. More 70s sensations — drummer Roger Taylor's Queen extravaganza marks 40 years since *A Night At The Opera* with a sold out gig at Birmingham Town Hall on Monday and Steve Harley brings Cockney Rebel to Symphony Hall on Tuesday.



'It's like walking a tightrope'

Brainy O'Briain is never boring

DARA O'Briain may have become a household name through *Mock The Week*, *The Apprentice*, *You're Fired!* and *Star Gazing Live*, but there's nothing he loves more than being in theatres to perform stand-up.

"The other day, I sat in an empty theatre thinking, 'I just love these rooms'. I'm on the board of the Theatres Trust to protect these wonderful buildings. I adore these places. It still gives me such a thrill to walk on stage. When you arrive at an empty theatre, the potential is immense. When the show starts and you hear those waves of laughter in the auditorium, it's a huge rush."

Though his show has toured the UK, when it reaches Birmingham, anything could happen: "I love the fact that you can shape the entire evening by thinking on your feet. It's like walking a tightrope."

A former maths and physics student at Dublin's prestigious Trinity University, Dara mixes comedy with science. He interviewed Professor Stephen Hawking this year. "His biggest regret was not being able to physically play with his children when they were little. I was happy that he was prepared to be that honest with me. I suppose when you're choosing your words as carefully as he does, why waste them on waffle?"

"It's great to tackle subjects that are more thought-provoking, but I have this dread that people will go 'Oh Dara's show - there'll be some bit where he bores us with some science thing'. Hopefully by then they're unable to talk because I have beaten them over the head with so much humour."

Dara O'Briain is at Birmingham Hippodrome tonight (Thu), tomorrow and Saturday.

Hoff on his way with 1980s musical

TV legend David Hasselhoff will arrive in Wolverhampton next week as part of the world premiere tour of a new musical.

The former *Baywatch* and *Knight Rider* star will be appearing in *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life* from Tuesday to Saturday, November 21, at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre.

The production opened in Blackpool last month and audiences in Wolverhampton will be among the first to see The Hoff plays Ross, a hedonist DJ who does not realise the disco era is over. While trying to keep up with a younger girlfriend played by Hollyoaks star Kim Tiddy, matters are complicated by the arrival of his teenage daughter.

Gershwin, Brel and Tchaikovsky

THE John Wilson Orchestra are on course to sell out their celebration of the musical genius of George Gershwin at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, tonight (Thu). Movie music maestro Wilson will present Gershwin's greatest hits in sumptuous original film orchestrations.

The music of France will be performed in the CBSO's Friday Night Classics concert *La vie en rose*, featuring tributes to Edith Piaf and Jacques Brel. Guest singers at Symphony Hall will include Graham Bickley. Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony and Beethoven's Violin Concerto, with Alina Ibragimova, feature in Wednesday's 2.15pm concert.

Opera is bringing musical madness

MADNESS descends upon Birmingham Hippodrome next week when Welsh National Opera's autumn season takes mental turmoil as its theme.

WNO explore Madness with a new production of Bellini's *I puritani* on Tuesday, which charts the heroine Elvira's mental disintegration. Linda Richardson sings Elvira and celebrated bel canto tenor Barry Banks sings Arturo.

Handel's *Orlando* is performed on Wednesday with musical virtuosity as a metaphor for insanity. Countertenor Lawrence Zazzo is in the lead role and the opera is relocated to London during the Blitz.

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View of the tree-lined La Rambla from Sants Montjuïc



The Sagrada Familia, a large Roman Catholic church



Debbie stayed at the Barceló Sants hotel



The futuristic tower, Sants Montjuïc

Father-daughter time is out of this world in super sci-fi hotel

A FAMILY holiday by the sea – a typical British summer pastime. But a mini break with dad when you're in your late 40s and he's late 60s?

My father and I can argue until blue in the face – but a love of sunshine, good food, a bit of architecture, and quite a lot of alcohol, I've sort of inherited from him.

Barcelona it is then. Dad declares it one of his favourite cities and has been there many times.

We're staying at Barceló Sants – a glass box of a hotel, a 20 minute train hop from the city's El Prat airport. The huge hotel is perched on top of the city's main railway station in the Sants district, a couple of miles from the historic centre, but surrounded by an abundance of shops and tavernas. The entrance to the recently-re-

By Debbie Bennett

furbished Barceló Sants is out of this world. Welcome aboard the 'space hotel' with its curved automatic glass doors, a circular internet hub, and giant images from sci-fi films high up beyond a wide staircase and gravity-defying mezzanine floor to the Orbital rooms and suites.

Our lovely twin room on the seventh floor overlooks the bustling district below. The restaurant too has a science theme, divided into three areas, the Oxygen buffet, the a-la-carte Hydrogen and chilled-out Nitrogen cafe.

Dad and I have booked three nights in sci-fi splendour, but head out into the warm July evening, exploring Sants. We chance upon the best paella we've ever tasted and guzzle sangria, before heading back to the hotel's Orbital bar, followed by some seri-

ous cyber sleep. Our two full days in heat-wave-hit Barcelona consist of exploring the sights, both on foot and on the fantastic Barcelona Bus Turistic. These sightseeing buses cover three routes, including the city's architecture-packed centre, taking in Antoni Gaudí's organic-style modernism masterpieces including Casa Milà and the still-unfinished Sagrada Família.

One bus takes us on a route unfamiliar even to dad. It's a delightful ascent along cool winding streets to the Sants Montjuïc district where stops along the way give panoramic views of the city below, including its centrepiece – the famous tree-lined La Rambla, and the imposing mountains beyond. Parts of Sants Montjuïc were created for the city's hosting of the Olympics in 1992. The stadiums, tracks and pools are still in use, guarded over by a sinuous futuristic 136m telecommunications tower. The

bus continues on down to the port where the blue Med glistens and pristine cruise ships wait in the harbour.

Dad and I have booked a little boat trip to escape the searing heat. The sightseeing bus stops near the small harbour of Port Olímpic where we meet David, our skipper for a couple of hours. Our vessel is a simple sailboat which holds no more than six people and the three of us have it all to ourselves. We head out to sea for about half a mile while David gives us a potted history of the city and of himself.

I get to swim, and dad gets to be captain before David serves up olives and Cava in between steering us back to port.

We crammed quite a lot into two days. We didn't get to visit all that Barcelona is famous for, but our galactic hotel, mini off-shore adventure and that father-daughter time made sure it was truly memorable.



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CHOICE



Monty Don

The Secret History of the British Garden (BBC2, 9pm)
With Alan Titchmarsh seemingly concentrating on ITV and Channel 4 projects these days, Monty Don is now the go-to man for the Beeb's gardening programmes. His latest series – broadcast in four parts – examines how British horticultural havens have changed during the past 400 years. He begins by hopping back in time to the 17th century, something that proves to be quite easy – the garden at Levens Hall in Cumbria, where Don kicks off his tour, is the only one in the country that has barely changed since the 1600s. But, thanks to archaeological evidence and a photograph taken by a Luftwaffe pilot, he also unearths evidence of a lost garden and a hidden message.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 8.20 MOTD Special: David Beckham's Match for Children. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** Sunday Morning Live. **11.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **12.00** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **1.45** Songs of Praise. **2.20** The Hunt. (R) **3.20** Formula 1: Brazilian Grand Prix. **6.00** BBC News. **6.10** Regional Programme. **6.20** **Countryfile.** Ellie Harrison reports on new farming developments in Frome, Somerset and samples some of the local produce. Plus, a look back at some memorable moments from past series. Including Weather For The Week Ahead. **7.20** **Strictly Come Dancing: The Results.** Tess Daly and Claudia Winkelman present the results of last night's show, before the two lowest scoring couples compete in a dance-off to avoid elimination from the contest. **8.00** **Antiques Roadshow.** Fiona Bruce presents the show from Walmer castle, Kent, where finds include a rare pottery piglet, a revolving table with secret compartments, and a British PoW's diary. **9.00** **The Hunt.** The challenges predators face finding and catching prey in a forest, featuring footage of tigers, pine martens, sparrowhawks, eagles and chimpanzees. Narrated by David Attenborough. **10.00** BBC News. **10.20** Regional Programme. **10.30** **Mrs Brown's Boys.** Agnes tries to persuade the health visitor Grandad is in need of respite care – so she can go on holiday – and receives ominous news from beyond the grave from her late husband. (R) **11.00** **Room 101 – Extra Storage.** Frank Skinner invites comedienne Sue Perkins. **Strictly Come Dancing** judge Bruno Tonioli and TV host Steve Jones to discuss their pet hates. Last in the series. (R) **11.40** **The Apprentice.** The candidates travel to a south London builder's yard, where Lord Sugar challenges them to set up and run and handyman business with the winning team generating the most money. (R) **12.40** Weather for the Week Ahead. **12.45** BBC News.

BBC2

6.15 The A to Z of TV Gardening. (R) **7.00** The Big Allotment Challenge. (R) **8.00** **Countryfile.** (R) **9.30** An Island Parish: Falklands. (R) **9.30** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.00** Simply Nigella. (R) **11.30** My Life on a Plate. (R) **12.15** My Life on a Plate. (R) **1.00** Terry and Mason's Great Food Trip. (R) **1.30** Terry and Mason's Great Food Trip. (R) **2.00** Live Tennis: ATP World Tour Finals. **5.00** Demolition: The Wrecking Crew. (R) **6.00** **Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School.** Five teachers from China take over the education of 50 teenagers in a Hampshire school to see whether the Chinese education system can work in the UK. (R) **7.00** **Caribbean with Simon Reeve.** Simon visits Nicaragua and Honduras on the last leg of his journey, before finishing by spending time with young Jamaicans who have rejected gang life. Last in the series. (R) **8.00** **Earth's Wildest Waters: The Big Fish.** Ben Fogle takes the three finalists to Zambia for the last challenge, where they must fish on the river Zambezi, competing for a catch with the local wildlife. Last in the series. **9.00** **The Secret History of the British Garden.** New series. Monty Don examines how British gardens have changed over time. The first episode focuses on the 17th century, with a visit to the only surviving garden from the 1600s. **10.00** **Family Guy.** Peter prepares for a fight with Liam Neeson, while Lois becomes a class helper and pays more attention to the other children than she does to Stevie. **10.25** **Family Guy.** Peter, Quagmire and Joe take a trip to Canada on a private jet, which crashes into the wilderness. Stranded in the wilderness for two months, Peter becomes feral. **10.45** **Family Guy.** Stevie's beloved teddy bear Rupert gets recalled, and he will stop at nothing to get him back. **11.05** **Film: Cosmopolis.** (2012) A billionaire driving across Manhattan has a series of strange encounters as he faces financial ruin. David Cronenberg's drama, with Robert Pattinson and Juliette Binoche. **12.50** Sign Zone: Countryfile. (R) **1.45** Holby City. (R) **2.45** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITY: Bottom Knockor Street. **6.10** Bottom Knockor Street. (R) **6.25** Bottom Knockor Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.50** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Oddbods. (R) **7.10** Sooty. (R) **7.25** Super 4. (R) **7.40** Matt Hatter Chronicles. **8.00** Marvel Avengers Assemble. (R) **8.30** Fish Hooks. **9.00** Horrible Science. **9.25** Murder: She Wrote. (R) **10.20** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **11.25** ITV News; Weather. **11.35** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **12.35** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. **1.30** River Monsters. (R) **2.00** Catchphrase. (R) **2.45** The X Factor. (R) **4.30** The Nation's Favourite Beatles Number One. (R) **6.30** Regional Programme; Weather. **6.45** ITV News; Weather. **7.00** **Jekyll and Hyde.** Robert tries to find a cure for Maggie's condition, which leads Garson to make a discovery about the Jekyll curse. Dance makes Robert a tempting offer in return for his help. **8.00** **The X Factor.** Caroline Flack and Olly Murs reveal the results of last night's live show, before the two lowest scoring contestants compete in a sing-off to decide who gets eliminated. **9.00** **I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!** New series. Ant and Dec present the celebrity survival challenge, which returns for a 15th series. Another batch of famous faces are packed off to the Australian jungle, although the unlucky contestants have not been identified at the time of going to press. There could be an unpleasant surprise in store for them this time, as the gruelling tasks get started as soon as they arrive. The first episode will give viewers the chance to vote for who must face the first of this year's stomach-churning Bush Tucker Trials. **10.50** ITV News; Weather. **11.10** **Off Their Rockers.** Mo embraces modern fashion, Tony reveals a saucy secret and Royston shares his strange inventions, as the irreverent hidden-camera show continues. (R) **11.40** **The Chase.** Bradley Walsh presents as four contestants work as a team to take on ruthless quiz genius the Chaser. (R) **12.35** Jackpot247. **3.00** Motorsport UK. **3.50** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.15 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **6.40** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.05** Chasing Perfection. **8.00** Frasier. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Channel 4 Racing. Live coverage from Cheltenham. **3.00** The Simpsons. (R) **3.30** **Film: The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader.** (2010) Fantasy adventure, with George Henley and Skandar Keynes. **5.40** Channel 4 News. **6.00** **Small Animal Hospital.** One-off episode in which John Barrowman reports on a black Labrador who collapsed suddenly, a cocker spaniel with a potentially fatal disease, and a terrier with cancer of the jaw. **7.00** **Restoring Britain's Landmarks.** The restoration of St Edward's Presbytery begins, a Grade I masterpiece which was designed and owned by architect Augustus Pugin. Alastair Dick-Cleland oversees the recreation of an oriel window which was destroyed in the 1950s, while at Belmont House, John Everts calls upon craftspeople to ensure it is ready for its first paying guests. Plus, Anna Keay learns about the secret technique which holds Astley Castle together. (R) **8.00** **Million Pound Mega Yachts.** Documentary about the Monaco Yacht Show, in which over 100 of the largest yachts on the water are up for sale, with billionaire buyers competing to own the most extravagant vessels. **9.00** **Homeland.** Saul decides to order a sweep at the station. Meanwhile, a beleaguered Carrie looks to During for some much-needed support. Thriller following a team of CIA agents, starring Claire Danes and Mandy Patinkin. **10.05** **Gogglebox.** Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. Narrated by Caroline Aherne. (R) **11.10** **Film: Man on a Ledge.** (2012) An escaped convict threatens to jump from a skyscraper, while his brother carries out a plan of his own in the ensuing chaos. Thriller, starring Sam Worthington and Jamie Bell. **1.10** Grand Designs Australia. **2.05** Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners. (R) **3.00** Come Dine with Me. (R) **4.55** Hugh's 3 Good Things: Best Bites. (R) **5.05** Location, Location, Location. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **6.20** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.30** Bob the Builder. (R) **6.45** Ticky Toc. (R) **6.55** Zack and Quack. (R) **7.05** Roobarb and Custard Too. (R) **7.15** Make Way for Noddy. (R) **7.25** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.40** Little Princess. (R) **7.55** Pip Ahoy! (R) **8.05** Blaze and the Monster Machines. **8.35** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.50** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **9.00** Toby's Travelling Circus. (R) **9.15** Jelly Jam. (R) **9.30** LazyTown. (R) **10.00** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.35** Football League Tonight. (R) **11.35** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.35** **Film: My Santa.** (2013) Drama, starring Samaira Armstrong. **2.15** **Film: A Fairytale Christmas.** (2013) Romantic drama, starring C Thomas Howell and Haylie Duff. **4.00** **Film: The Christmas Secret.** (2014) Drama, starring Bethany Joy Lenz. **5.40** **Film: Christmas with the Kranks.** (2004) Festive comedy, starring Jamie Lee Curtis and Tim Allen. **7.30** **5 News Weekend.** **7.35** **Funnies Falls, Falls & Flops.** Comedy clip show featuring pranks gone wrong, unwise acts and failed attempts of misplaced ambition. **8.00** **Impractical Jokers US.** The guys teach a karate class, pose as newspaper reporters, steal from people's shopping baskets and take a massage chair into the street to offer free neck and head rubs. **8.30** **Impractical Jokers US.** The guys steal food from customers' plates in a restaurant and try to teach languages they cannot speak. **9.00** **Film: Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters.** (2013) The fairytale brother and sister grow up to be renowned witch hunters, using advanced weaponry to battle the supernatural. Their latest case leads to an encounter with a powerful sorceress. Fantasy adventure, with Gemma Arterton and Jeremy Renner. **10.45** **Film: Killer Elite.** (2011) A former secret agent takes on one last mission to save his mentor, but assassins are sent to stop him. Action thriller, starring Jason Statham, Clive Owen and Robert De Niro. **12.50** Criminals: Caught on Camera. (R) **1.15** SuperCasino. **3.10** Eamonn & Ruth: How the Other Half Lives. (R) **4.00** House Doctor. (R) **4.25** Make It Big. (R) **5.45** Angels of Jarm. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 Formula 1: Brazilian Grand Prix Highlights
8.00 Top Gear **9.00** Russell Howard's Good News **9.30** **Film: Kidulthood** (2005) **11.05** Family Guy **11.50** American Dad! **12.15** Family Guy **12.35** Rent a Cop **1.05** The Rise of Female Violence **2.00** Russell Howard's Good News **2.30** Together **4.00** Close
BBC Four
7.00 The Fairytale Castles of King Ludwig II with Dan Cruickshank **8.00** Mark Lawson Talks To David Hare **9.00** On Stage: Live from Television Centre **10.00** Blood and Gutter: 70 Years of the Citizens Theatre **12.00** Lost Land of the Tiger **1.00** Full Throttle: The Glory Days of British Motorbikes **2.00** Plastic: How It Works **3.00** Mark Lawson Talks To David Hare **4.00** Close
ITV2
11.05 The X Factor **12.55** I'm a Celeb: Stars of Oz **2.00** I'm a Celeb: Epic Trials **3.00** **Film: A Cinderella Story** (2004) **4.55** **Film: Miss Congeniality 2: Armed and Fabulous** (2005) **7.10** **Film: Bean** (1997) **9.00** The Xtra Factor **10.05** Funnist Ever You've Been Framed **10.50** I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here Now! **11.55** **Film: Almost Married** (2014) **1.50** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.15** Teleshopping **5.45** **ITV2** Nightscreen
ITV3
11.40 Wycliffe **12.50** **Film: Columbo: Troubled Waters** (1975) **1.50** Agatha Christie's Marple **4.55** Midsomer Murders **6.55** Sunday Night at the Palladium **7.55** By Royal Appointment **9.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **11.00** **Film: Changeling** (2008) **1.45** The John Thaw Story **2.40** Wycliffe **3.35** Movies Now **3.40** **ITV3** Nightscreen **4.00** Emmerdale
ITV4
11.15 MotoGP Highlights **12.15** World Rally Championship Highlights **12.45** Snooker: Champion of Champions Live **5.15** Pawn Stars **5.45** Storage Wars **6.45** Snooker: Champion of Champions Live **11.15** **Film: Mickey Blue Eyes** (1999) **1.20** Jimmy White: Sports Life Stories **2.25** Nitro Circus **2.50** **ITV4** Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping
E4
12.35 **Film: Diary of a Wimpy Kid** (2010) **2.30** Couples Come Dine with Me **4.35** Rude (ish) Tube Shorts **4.50** The Big Bang Theory **7.15** **Film: Men in Black II** (2002) **9.00** The Big Bang Theory **10.00** The Inbetweeners **11.10** The IT Crowd **12.15** First Dates **1.20** Drifters **1.50** Cheving Gum **2.20** Rules of Engagement **3.00** How I Met Your Mother **3.20** Hollyoaks
Film4
11.00 Anastasia (1997) **1.00** St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold (2009) **3.05** Napoleon Dynamite (2004) **4.55** Big (1988) **7.00** Run Fat Boy Run (2007) **9.00** Independence Day (1996) **11.45** The X Files: I Want to Believe (2008) **1.50** Down to the Bone (2004) **4.00** Close

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
Meet the Parents, BBC1, 10.45pm
A male nurse delays proposing to his girlfriend until he has won the approval of her strict father, a former CIA agent who does not suffer fools gladly, and vows to be on his best behaviour during a visit to her family home. However, his efforts to impress soon collapse into a catalogue of disasters. Comedy, starring Robert De Niro, Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson. (2000)

TUESDAY
The Invisible, BBC1, 12.05am
A teenager attacked and left for dead is left hovering between life and death, and tries to persuade his assailant to confess. Thriller, with Justin Chatwin and Marcia Gay Harden. (2007)

WEDNESDAY
Oranges and Sunshine, BBC1, 11.35pm
A social worker discovers that, over several decades, thousands of British children have been falsely informed their parents are dead and been forcibly sent to care homes in Australia, where they suffered terrible abuse. She devotes herself to exposing the scandal and helping the victims to find their families. Fact-based drama, with Emily Watson. (2010)



Meet the Parents, Monday, BBC1, 10.45pm

THURSDAY
The Wild Geese, Channel 5, 10pm
A corporation hoping to bring about the downfall of an African dictator hires a group of British mercenaries to free a political prisoner dangerous to the regime. However, when the company changes its plans and makes a deal with the tyrant, the soldiers and the man they have saved are left surrounded by hostile military forces with no escape route. Action adventure, starring Richard Burton and Roger Moore. (1978)

FRIDAY
The Eiger Sanction, ITV, 11.15pm
An art professor who once worked as an assassin is blackmailed into returning to his old career to eliminate a spy. However, his target is in the middle of a mountaineering expedition, forcing the hitman to embark on a perilous climb up the Eiger in hot pursuit. Action adventure, directed by and starring Clint Eastwood. With George Kennedy. (1975)

Celebrities get ready to face their fears

The dark nights are drawing in, and most of us would love the chance to get away for a few weeks, leave the autumn chill behind and find some sunshine.

So how does a fortnight in the Australian jungle sound?

Actually, second thoughts – don't go there!

As well as the bugs, snakes and other creepy crawlies, you will most likely bump into some highly-strung reality TV stars arguing over a grain of rice or eating fish eyes seasoned with termites.

Yes, it's that time of year again folks, so hold on to your cork hats as I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here! is back and promising to be as good as, if not better, than ever.

If the rumours are to be believed, this year is going to be even tougher for the stars.

A whole host of new Bushtucker trials have been revealed, including Sun Scream, which involves contestants smearing gruesome concoctions, including bugs and fish guts, over each others' skin.

And then there are sheep's testicles to deal with. This trial apparently works like a normal limbo, but as the celebrities bend under the cane, they have to have 10 sheep testicles dangled in their mouths.

The food in the eating challenges has apparently stepped up a notch as well, with dishes of the day including duck feet, cow lips, bush pig semen, camel penis porridge, boiled sheep testicles and rat tail soup.

It may only feel like only yesterday that Gemma Collins was crying mascara stained tears while complaining of contracting malaria and Carl Fogarty was being crowned King of the Jungle.

However, the rumour mill has gone into overdrive, as members of the public (and bookies) attempt to guess who will fly out to the Land of Oz.

Labour MP Simon Danczuk, athlete Iwan Thomas, TV chef Rustie Lee, choreographer Brian Friedman, X Factor reject Chloe Mafia, Emmerdale actress Gemma Oaten, and TV personality and retired athlete Caitlyn Jenner (formerly Bruce Jenner) are

some of the names being banded about.

It has also been reported by one newspaper that Watchdog and The Weakest Link host Anne Robinson has been offered £750,000 to take part, while glamour model Katie Price, who has already appeared twice on the ITV show, in 2004 and 2009, is fancied to make it a jungle hat-trick.

But arguably the most interesting name rumoured to be making an appearance is... Paul Gascoigne.

Gazza is one of the finest footballers this country has ever produced, but has more recently tended to hit the headlines for all the wrong reasons, mainly due to his battle with the bottle and turbulent love life.

Two stars who definitely won't be eating witchetty grubs this year though are Gazza's fellow Geordies Ant and Dec, who quickly shot down any rumours that they would become contestants for the first time.

Dec replied to a fan on Twitter with the words Absolutely NO chance. Zero. Zip. Nada. None. Nope. Stop it."



I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!, Sunday, ITV, 9pm

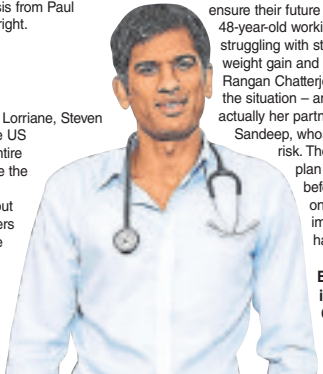
BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Simply Nigella BBC2, 8.30pm
Food writer Nigella Lawson demonstrates dishes that combine the comfort of the familiar with the excitement of the new, including fluffy oat pancakes drizzled with a raspberry and honey syrup. She offers a twist on a classic Caesar salad for a light lunch idea, and rustles up a Greek-inspired supper for friends including squid and orzo pasta, and a sweet and savoury version of a cheesecake. Nigella's simple rice bowl with ginger, radish and avocado celebrates a few choice ingredients and results in a dish that's uplifting to look at, as well as to eat.

TUESDAY
Live International Football ITV, 7.30pm
England v France (Kick-off 8.00pm). Coverage of the friendly encounter at Wembley Stadium, as the Three Lions take on the hosts of next year's European Championship. Roy Hodgson's men came through an admittedly favourable qualifying group with 10 wins out of 10 – the only country to finish with a 100 per cent record. The French didn't need to qualify for the tournament, so they will see this match as an important step toward their

preparations for the summer. Head coach Didier Deschamps captained the team that won the trophy in 2000, two years after lifting the World Cup on home soil, and his already legendary status could be cemented if he leads the current squad to victory at the Stade de France in July. Mark Pougatch presents, with analysis from Paul Scholes, Lee Dixon and Ian Wright.

WEDNESDAY
Toast of London Channel 4, 10.30pm
New series. Live on chat show Lorriane, Steven tells a tale that could topple the US government and destroy the entire world, while Jane tries to evade the men in black. Plus, Toast is overcome with a debilitating bout of stage fright when he discovers an outdoor performance of The Scottish Play, directed by acclaimed theatrical director Peggy Plywood, will be broadcast live on ITV. Although Ed and Mrs P are on hand to help, it may take someone with more gusto to shake him out of it. Matt Berry stars.



Doctor in the House, Thursday, BBC1, 9pm

THURSDAY
Doctor in the House BBC1, 9pm
New series. Families worried about their health invite a GP to move in and investigate their lives in the hope he can transform their lifestyles and ensure their future wellbeing. First up is 48-year-old working mother Priti, who is struggling with stress, headaches, weight gain and disrupted sleep. Dr Rangan Chatterjee moves in to monitor the situation – and soon realises it is actually her partner, 49-year-old Sandeep, whose health is more at risk. The doctor draws up a plan of lifestyle changes, before they are measured on how much of an impact the resident medic has had on their health.

Ben Fogle: New Lives in the UK Channel 5, 9pm
Ben Fogle meets people who have escaped the rat race for a more

rewarding life elsewhere in the UK. This week he travels to Wales to meet 61-year-old Emma Orbach, who abandoned 'modern' Britain, her family home and even her marriage to live in a mud hut deep in the countryside, where she spurns all forms of technology and convenience. Unfortunately, her hut burned down last year, so Ben helps build a new one while also helping to collect wood, washing in the river and enjoying her only luxury - a home-made sauna.

FRIDAY
Adele at the BBC BBC1, 8.30pm
Much of the narrative surrounding the launch of Adele's latest single, Hello, has focused on her use of a hilariously outdated flip-phone in the accompanying video. However the fact that there is such a narrative is testament to the singer-songwriter's popularity. Do you think anyone other than his network provider cares what phone Steve Brookstein uses? Yes, with Hello dialling in first-week sales of 333,000 (A three-year UK record), the Tottenham songstress is a big deal. This special one-off performance, then, which sees her take the stage with her full band as well as chatting to host Graham Norton, is well worth catching – especially since it's her first television performance since February 2013.

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BRAIN GYM No.351

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.

19 17 5 15 19 5 4 8 21 8 7 18 11
11 21 5 4 4 9
5 16 7 20 21 8 16 4 12 18
4 8 19 25 25 20 11 18
18 8 12 10 19 18 17 11
3 20 13 18 11 6 2 18 19 21
20 16 1
18 9 23 18 17 25 18 22 22 6
14 16 6 19 18 2 5 4
5 15 17 10 21 17 20 10
8 5 26 16 5 11 4 20 17 25
4 25 8 18 19
18 4 4 16 22 17 18 24 8 21 23 12

1 14
2 15
3 16 O
4 17 L
5 18
6 19
7 20
8 21
9 22
10 23
11 24
12 25
13 26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

I Q J X E V Y A L T G F U
14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26
D Z K O W H M P C B R N S

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across

- 1. Crucial examination for detective force appearing in a trial (4,4)
- 5. Got back a classical piece of attire (4)
- 9. More than one mischief-maker is surrounding the politician (4)
- 10. Try a seal for old time's sake (4,4)
- 11. A publication for the family (5)
- 12. Steelworks discovered near the railway (7)
- 13. Fails to keep calm and gets axed (5,4,4)
- 18. Being warlike, I fired in army manoeuvre (8)
- 19. A style on holiday (4)
- 20. One isn't upset by stress (7)
- 21. See 2 Down
- 22. Did artistic work and proved an attraction (4)
- 23. Dreadfully enraged by eastern apostate (8)

Down

- 2 & 21Ac. Makes an appearance, as the moth invariably does (5,2,5)
- 3. Being positioned in the wrong side will produce argument (7)
- 4. It provides an opening for employees (5,8)
- 6. Description of late train should have been settled (7)
- 7. Equipped for an attack, we hear (7)
- 8. Bends down, we hear, for the water vessels (6)
- 13. Restricted cover round small child (7)
- 14. Lack of sound selenic arrangement (7)
- 15. Fixed offence against the church becomes prevalent (4,2)
- 16. Being informed about judicial proceedings (7)
- 17. In a wicked setting she is put to shame (7)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9 10
11 12
13 14 15 16 17
18 19
20 21
22 23

Quick Clues:

Across

- 1. Tip (8)
- 5. Expensive (4)
- 9. Too (4)
- 10. Haughty (8)
- 11. Greater (5)
- 12. Excursionist (7)
- 13. Somersaulting (4,4,5)
- 18. Pastoral (8)
- 19. Select (4)
- 20. Toil (7)
- 21. Intended (5)
- 22. Notch (4)
- 23. Helped (8)

Down

- 2. Set free (7)
- 3. Double (3-4)
- 4. Reverse fortunes (4,3,6)
- 6. Pattern (7)
- 7. Profits (7)
- 8. Refinement (6)
- 13. Encourage (7)
- 14. Antiquated (7)
- 15. Painful experience (6)
- 16. Utter (7)
- 17. Authorise (7)

Sudoku

3 4 5
6 8 9 3
3 7 1 6 2
5 1 6 2
2 6 9 8
9 1 2 7
1 2 5 7
4 2 3 9

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

3 5 2 6 7 4 9 1 8
9 1 7 5 3 8 4 2 6
8 4 6 2 3 1 5 3 7
6 9 3 4 5 7 1 8 2
4 8 5 1 6 2 7 9 3
2 7 1 3 8 9 6 4 5
7 3 8 9 1 6 2 5 4
5 2 9 7 4 3 8 6 1
1 6 4 8 2 5 3 7 9

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Pawned; 4 Coffin; 9 All for nothing; 10 Extreme; 11 Occur; 12 Board; 14 Penny; 18 Might; 19 Replica; 21 After a fashion; 22 Refuse; 23 Meander. Down: 1 Places; 2 Well thought of; 3 Erode; 5 Outcome; 6 Fair condition; 7 Regard; 8 Andes; 13 Re-torts; 15 Impair; 16 Drift; 17 Banner; 20 Paste. QUICK - Across: 1 Repeat; 4 Morass; 9 Unrepresented; 10 Dangled; 11 Atone; 12 Shape; 14 Merit; 18 Enter; 19 Travail; 21 Incarceration; 22 Delays; 23 Recess. Down: 1 Rounds; 2 Par-enthetical; 3 Appal; 5 Overawe; 6 Authoritative; 7 Sudden; 8 Ready; 13 Portray; 15 Behind; 16 Steer; 17 Flanks; 20 Awake.

Quiz

- 1. How many U.S. presidents have been called Adams?
- 2. Who wrote Love and Mr. Lewisham?
- 3. In what year was the Turner wing in the London Tate Gallery opened?
- 4. Between what years was the Spanish Civil War fought?
- 5. What was the seventh month of the Old Roman calendar?
- 6. What is a John Dory?
- 7. What is ambergris?
- 8. What is the atomic number of carbon?
- 9. Who do you associate with the phrase 'Cogito, ergo sum'?
- 10. What was William Cody better known as?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 John Selwyn Gummer; 2 The Balearic Islands; 3 Breadfruit; 4 1949; 5 Cana; 6 1976; 7 Aldo Moro; 8 James Boswell; 9 Denmark; 10 Zambia.

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

762123 gives a sailor,
435238 gives a child,
5998123 gives a servant.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Niner: FACTORIES

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Lower Gornal
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Take a shine to Mazda2

By John Griffiths

Mazda is hoping buyers who want to stand out from the crowd will take a shine to a new special edition of its supermini.

The £15,395 Mazda2 Sport Black is based on the standard 1.5-litre petrol version of the car, but with special paintwork and trim, plus a range of options for further personalisation.

Based on the top specification SE-L Nav version, the new models get stand-out front and side skirts, plus a roof spoiler in 'brilliant black' to contrast with the 'soul red' metallic or 'snowflake white' pearlescent paint schemes.



The Sport Black gets a chromed exhaust tailpipe trim, gunmetal alloy wheels, rear privacy glass, rear parking sensors and automatic headlights and wipers. There are also optional decal graphics and contrasting door mirror colours.

The special edition is designed to broaden the appeal of the Mazda2, which has already won a number of awards – including 'car of the year' in the influential Car Dealer Power awards.

There are 11 petrol and four diesel variants in the range at prices from £11,995 to £17,995.

The new Mazda2 was launched earlier this year to critical acclaim, because of its equipment, space and driving characteristics.

It is longer than its predecessor, but with shorter overhangs which allowed the engineers to make a significant increase in interior space.

The Sport Black's 1.5-litre engine turns out 90PS of power, which (on official figures) is capable of averaging almost 63mpg and a low, tax-busting 105g/km of CO2 emissions. It's 0 to 62mph sprint time is a nifty 9.8 seconds.

It's the middle of the three petrol versions in power terms, as well as near the middle of the range in price terms, so an obvious candidate for the sporty styling aimed at adding buyer appeal and, perhaps, broadening the customer base.

If the performance and economy figures are an impressive combination, it's down to Mazda's SKYACTIV technology now used in all its vehicles. It consists of new and more efficient engines combined with significant weight-saving, including the use of stronger yet lighter materials in the body and chassis.

Secondary effects are lower noise levels



'If the performance and economy figures are an impressive combination, it's down to Mazda's SKYACTIV technology now used in all its vehicles.'

and sharper handling. Combined with revised power steering it makes the Mazda2 a fun, confidence-inspired car that's also quiet and refined.

The new car has significantly more headroom, with extra shoulder room for the driver and front passenger, too.

The cabin is trimmed with higher quality materials, with a new seven-inch touch screen dominating the centre of the dash for audio, communications and satnav functions.

The boot, too has grown: now 280 litres

which can be increased to an impressive 950 litres if the split/fold rear seats are folded down

Apart from the Sport Black styling extras, the car comes with a high level of equipment including fog lights, privacy glass, automatic headlamps and wipers, rear parking sensors, a multimedia system including CD stereo with integrated Bluetooth, navigation system, smart city brake and lane departure warning, as well as the standard safety package including multiple airbags and stability control.

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Stability a key to success

By John Griffiths

Three wheels on my wagon . . . and I'm rolling along quite happily, thank you.

Piaggio's MP3, a range of three-wheeled scooters with 300 or 500cc four-stroke engines, attracts many a curious glance because it is an unusual sight on our roads.

Perhaps that's because we're not so scooter-orientated here as our cousins on the continent, where they make up quite a proportion of city traffic. In fact, it's Europe's biggest seller.

Why? Well for a start it can be ridden on a standard car licence, because it falls in the same class as a Reliant Robin, and for those coming from the world of four wheelers it's rather less daunting than an ordinary, 13in wheel two-wheeled scooter because of its inherent stability.

It's also cheap enough to run (80mpg plus and £38 a year VED) and, crucially, it's narrow enough to filter through traffic jams like a conventional bike, unlike some of the more familiar trikes with two wheels at the rear.

Then there's that very clever tilting front end developed by Piaggio which has a number of dynamic advantages.

The MP3 feels more stable over bumpy roads than a two-wheeled scooter, and corners like a conventional bike - capable of some pretty extreme lean angles limited mainly by the risk of grounding the centre stand's foot lever.

It looks strange if you're watching someone else tackling a bend, but perfectly natural if you're in the saddle.

Meanwhile the steering/suspension system ensures both front wheels stay in contact with the road. That, by its nature, means additional grip which also comes into play when you're braking, and the MP3 has discs on all three wheels so braking is sure and stable.

Just as the MP3 was the first three-wheeled scooter, these new models are the first to come with anti-lock brakes and traction control which prevent the single, powered rear wheel from slipping in the wet. The new disc brakes are bigger, too, for a little extra stopping power.

The 300 has a conventional 'twist and go' transmission

with centrifugal clutch and continuously variable transmission which does dampen its acceleration performance a little but makes urban riding effortless. But on the open road it will reach 70mph in short order and sit there quite happily on a dual carriageway.

The four-stroke engine turns out 23.1bhp and 24.3Nm of torque and is liquid cooled: the machine itself is so quiet you can hear the hum of the cooling fan if you're stuck in slow traffic.

The extra stability provided by the third wheel was, for me, particularly welcome at slow speeds around town which is where this MP3 is expected to spend much of its life. Clue - its called the 'Yourban'.

Balanced

The twin suspension can be locked into the upright position by means of a switch on the right handlebar. This means the MP3 can be parked without using the centre stand, and it has a handbrake too. I did use the stand, though (I always prefer the belt and braces approach) especially as the machine is surprising well balanced so only requires a little foot pressure on the stand lever.

Some riders use the same system at traffic lights and junctions so they don't have to put a foot down (the lock is automatically released as you open the throttle to move off). However the subconscious side of my brain which is conditioned to riding two-wheelers proved difficult to overcome on relatively short acquaintance with the MP3.

Regular scooter riders will appreciate the weather protection afforded by the tall front shield, and on top of that there's a new height-adjustable windshield.

The seat is sumptuous and beautifully shaped for comfort for both the rider and pillion passenger. Underneath, there's a 50 litre 'boot' capable of taking two full-face helmets, and it's even equipped with a light and 12-volt power socket. One of the optional extras is a dedicated multimedia system which allows you to link a smartphone to the Piaggio's electronics, to provide comprehensive trip information as well as a satnav system.

The MP3 also has a pull-out bag hook, plus a draw with USB connection designed for keeping your phone charged. There are two versions of the Yourban, the 'Business' and



the test bike, the 'Sport' which appeared well put together and trimmed with chrome and high gloss black plastic.

Bigger five-spoke alloy wheels (up from 12 to 13in) and LED daytime running lights are part of the complete cosmetic redesign for the new models, as are the new handlebars and the full set of modern electronic instruments: speedo, rev counter, clock and trip computer and, usefully, an ice alarm.

Also new are the anti-impact pads in front of the rider's knees, plus a parcel holder and grab handles for the pillion rider at the rear.

At £6,134 for the 300cc Yourban, the MP3 isn't cheap compared to some rival commuter transport such as, for example, a 250cc bike or more conventional maxi scooter.

But, when it invented those clever forks and suspension of the tilting front end, Piaggio created a whole new market sector. These new models go further along that road, with the addition of disc brakes, traction control and ABS, plus decent luggage capacity and comprehensive instruments.

I'm not sure about experienced bikers, but the highest card in its winning hand is its confidence-inspiring extra stability and ease of use over conventional rivals. This has clearly proved to be the deciding factor for the 150,000 Europeans - the majority probably car drivers - who have switched to a cheaper, quicker form of commuter transport.

It's as different to a conventional bike as it is to a car, but for non-riders contemplating buying one I'd advise a few hours passing your CBT would be well spent.

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Well-priced and quality make SUV a great buy

By Sharon Walters

It's not all that long ago that marques such as Kia were seen as the cheap and not always necessarily cheerful option – well at least in the likes of my generation!

Now nothing could be further from the truth. Kia produces well-built, stylish, reasonably priced vehicles that have one of the best warranty systems around.

Things started to change for the company in the late 1990s and began in earnest in 2006 with a design-led revolution following the appointment of Peter Schreyer as chief design officer. That was the start of Phase I of Kia's move away from being primarily focused on value. And now we are in Phase II which is seeing Kia match and surpass not only customer expectations but also the world's best car marques for engineering, technology, refinement and quality.

One car that has gone through these changes is the Kia Sorento which first appeared in 2002 as the brand's first full-size SUV. Now in its third generation, the 4x4 is bigger and better than ever before – as I found out in a week-long road test in which I really put it through its paces.

The entry level at £28,795 comes loaded with standard kit although there's only one engine to choose from, and all cars come with standard four-wheel drive with manual and automatic gearboxes options.

The 2.2-litre version of Kia's R-family turbodiesel engine, which meets EU6 emissions requirements, has plenty of pull with 197bhp and can get from 0 to 60mph in nine seconds with a top speed possible of 124mph. On motorway driving it cruises very comfortably at 70mph with the reassurance of being aware it has that bit of 'extra' if you need to get out of any trouble. And although it's a far-sized car, it copes well with winding rural and pot-holed covered roads. By the way, those are the conditions of the majority of my 25-mile commute to the office each day.

Anticipates

Sorento features the Dynamax all-wheel-drive system first seen in Kia's Sportage. This is an intelligent, electronically controlled all-wheel-drive system which continuously monitors driving conditions and anticipates when all-wheel drive will be needed, rather than simply reacting to changing conditions. Normally it delivers 100 per cent of engine torque to the front wheels, but the torque can be redistributed up to a maximum of 60:40 front-to-rear to enhance cornering stability or if road conditions deteriorate. For off-road driving, owners can manually select lock mode, which gives a 50:50 torque split at speeds of up to 25mph. In the Sorento it is paired with Advanced Traction Cornering Control (ATCC).

There are four trim levels, badged KX-1, KX-2, KX-3 and KX-4. Depending on model, buyers have the choice of six-speed manual or automatic transmission.

All four trim grades have seven seats, now with a 40:20:40 split in the middle row and a 50:50 split in the rear. The third row of seats fold flush into the boot floor, while the second row also folds flat by pulling a handle in the boot and can slide back and forth to accommodate larger passengers in the third row. And it really is easy to fold and move those seats. I loaded my Sorento with friends to gauge the comfort level and even those in the very back said the ride was good and they didn't feel packed in like sardines. Equally I did a trip to a DIY store (not one of my favourite places), put the seats down and found it to be a very good load lugger.

Depending on model, the Sorento features a number of highly advanced new safety and convenience technologies including adaptive smart cruise control to maintain a gap to the vehicle ahead, speed limit information, around-view monitoring, cross traffic alert to prevent the owner from backing out of a parking space into the path of an approaching vehicle, a smart park assist system, lane departure warning with blind spot detection and self-dimming adaptive front lighting.

Extensive standard features include alloy wheels, black side sill and wheel-arch mouldings, roof rails and a rear spoiler, cornering lights integrated into the foglights, LED daytime running lights, front wiper de-icers, electrically-adjustable, folding and heated door mirrors, door sill scuff plates, steering wheel-mounted controls, all-round electric windows and cruise control with speed limiter. Safety is taken care of by electronic stability control, vehicle stability management, trailer assist, ABS with electronic brake force distribution and brake assist, six airbags, active front head-rests, front seat belt pre-tensioners and load limiters and an active bonnet to protect pedestrians.

And if you do want to tow a horsebox or a caravan, Sorento can manage 2,500kg in manual format and 2,000kg in automatic. Now that is excellent and beats a lot of the opposition in its sector.

Sorento also has Kia's industry-leading seven-year, 100,000-mile warranty.

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Swimmers come back with a haul of medals

TWELVE senior swimmers from Halesowen Swimming Club travelled to the brand new Harvey Hadden Sports Village in Nottingham.

The swimmers were heading for a weekend of competition at this year's ASA Midland Short Course Championships.

Competing against others from the best swimming squads in the region the opposition was always going to be tough, however Halesowen swimmers exceeded expectations and managed to produce some impressive performances in the water.

Josh Bradley, aged 22, produced outstanding performances, getting through to five finals and grabbing a gold medal in the 100m Individual Medley to become the Midland Short Course Champion.

Chloe Finch, 17, who also swims for City of Birmingham Swimming Club, also produced some excellent swims and made two finals, hauling silver in the 200m freestyle and then grabbing a bronze in the 400m Freestyle.

Finch just missed out on the medals when she came 4th in the 800m freestyle.

Other swimmers who battled their way to the finals were Megan Tinsdale, 19, in the 50m freestyle, Mark Laing, 16, in the 50m backstroke and James Cuthbert, 14, in the 50m butterfly who came sixth in the 15 and under age group.

The clubs remaining competing swimmers were Emma Bird, Isabel Bowers, Liley Merrell, Katherine Morrice, Jack Simpson, Ryan Spoor and Callum Tinsdale.

Heathens talk on Monmore lifeline

CRADLEY HEATHENS' hopes of survival have been given a massive shot in the arm.

The club has confirmed they are in talks over a return to Wolverhampton's Monmore Green Stadium which would allow their management team of Chris Van Straaten, Gary Patchett and Nigel Pearson to continue.

The future of the Heathens has been in limbo since the trio confirmed they would not be running the club at Perry Barr next season and they were on the lookout for new management.

However, they have now entered "constructive dialogue" with stadium owners Ladbrokes in an attempt to secure a return to the venue they utilised as

their temporary home until a year ago. A club statement said: "Cradley Heathens can confirm they have entered into constructive dialogue with representatives of Monmore Green Stadium regarding a potential return to Wolverhampton for the 2016 season. The current management team are doing everything within their power to ensure the famous club continues to race into the new campaign.

"Whilst these talks continue, no further discussions will take place regarding the sale of the club as the management trio would be willing to continue at Monmore Green with the help and support of the Heathens Supporters Trust, Ollie Ommer Children's Club and the loyal group of supporters."

"We would like to thank our fans, riders and sponsors for their patience and hope we can bring some positive news in the near future." The news comes as a major boost to supporters of the former Dudley Wood outfit, who have endured a turbulent time since losing the use of Monmore Green last year.

Despite securing the use of Perry Barr to remain on track in 2015, they have experienced a difficult season following the switch.

However, director Pearson is encouraged by the possibility of a return to Monmore Green.

"While we cannot promise anything at this stage, it's clear both parties are doing all they can," Pearson said.

Rowett's request is fulfilled by the Blues

Fulham 2 Blues 5

BOSS Gary Rowett praised the attacking prowess of his side as they ran out comfortable winners at Fulham.

Blues ended a run of three games without scoring with a comprehensive display against a 10-man side, leading Rowett to believe his pre-game instructions paid off.

"I did ask them for a little bit more attacking quality as I felt we have been a bit wasteful in the final third, and not being ruthless enough," he said.

Birmingham powered ahead with two goals in the space of three minutes. Their first, after 19 minutes, came when Stephen Gleeson struck first time from a pass by Jacques Maghoma to superbly drive home from 20 yards out.

Paul Caddis doubled the lead from the penalty spot after 22 minutes, when the onrushing Clayton Donaldson was fouled by Joe Lewis – although cries for a dismissal from the away fans were tempered when he received a booking. It got even better for Rowett's men two minutes later when Toral fired home after a cross from Maghoma.

James Husband was dismissed for the home side with his second booking of the game, but the hosts were given a glimmer of hope on 66 minutes when Alexander Kacaniklic slotted home.

Donaldson made sure of the points, while a Ross McCormack effort in injury time was cancelled out by Viv Solomon-Otabor.

And the defeat proved to be the end for Kit Symons, who was axed as Fulham boss.

Club owner Shahid Khan has aspirations to return the club to the Premier League.

Hales come through first of testing run

Birmingham Solihull 7 Old Halesonians 29
THE last time Old Hales played against Birmingham Solihull was in the Pilkington Cup many years ago.

The early exchanges saw Hales dominant and the home side were retreating in the set scrums from early on. Unfortunately this was not converted into ground for the visitors.

The Hales tight control let through a 17 minute penalty for the visitors which full back Chris Hooper converted.

Hales were rewarded on 25 minutes when following a lineout won by man of the match, Tom King, the ball came out to winger Luke Smith who combined well with Hooper who scored.

The result of a brawl was a red card and sending off for the Hales prop, Louis Padian and the Birmingham's No.8. Changes to the packs and a settling back period saw Bees make a rare visit to the Hales 22 where they scored a well worked try which brought the first half to a close.

Attacked

From the kick off Hales attacked continually with forwards, Pete Fitzgerald, Tom Jordan, Max Macfarlane, Tom King and Owen Jones making ground in the muddy conditions.

Scrum half, Dave Hadkiss kept the ball flowing with the backs trying to break the Bees defence.

Three penalties in succession saw Hopper convert all for the lead after 65 minutes. Constant driving mauls and superior fitness saw Hales in total command with a wilting home response.

Hales backs started to come into their own, their defence was excellent and attacking runs by the Robinson Brothers Carl and Andy supported by Ben Barkley and Oli Rayner kept Bees on the back foot.

But it was the Hales forwards who went to town. A driving maul for some 20 metres resulted in King gathering the ball for a great forwards' try.

On 77 minutes Hales found themselves yet again in the ascendancy, Fitzgerald bursting through the tired home defence before offloading to King for his second try in five minutes, converted by Oli Rayner.

The time was left for a bonus point try but although the home side had capitulated there was not enough time to secure the fourth try.



Pete Fitzgerald in full flight during the match against Birmingham Solihull at the weekend

This Saturday Old Hales play host to local rivals Bromsgrove in what should be another tough game. This is also Murray Keens' Presidents day who will be entertaining over 100 guests at a pre match lunch prior to the kick off at 2.15 pm.

Old Halesonians 2nds 56 Birmingham Solihull Development 12

Birmingham Solihull Development team turned up for this league game with only 13 players, so the game

was played with uncontested scrums.

Kieron Haynes raced 25 metres to score after only seven minutes.

Three minutes later hooker Sam Jones crossed the line for a try.

Old Hales continued in attack mode and Sam Alvey who scored from short range.

Just before half time Sam Jones broke free to score from five metres out for a 20-0 lead.

Joonas gets signed up for Wolves

WOLVERHAMPTON have snapped up experienced international racer Joonas Kylmakorpi as the first member of their top five for the 2016 season.

After unveiling reserve pairing Kyle Howarth and Max Clegg last week, the club have now swooped for the four-time World Long Track Champion who spent last season with Coventry.

Kylmakorpi, aged 35, enjoyed a hugely successful 2015 campaign with the Bees and put in some eye-catching displays at Monmore Green.

He will now line-up in gold and black as Peter Adams' side aim to bounce back into play-off contention in 2016.

Wolves promoter Chris Van Straaten said he: "We are delighted with the signing."

Morrison is delighted with break timing

ALBION midfielder James Morrison is delighted with the timing of this latest international break – even it has irked boss Tony Pulis.

Morrison made his first start for Albion on Saturday since returning from an ankle injury.

He looked off the pace at Old Trafford and now the Scot is pleased to have some time to get back to fitness with his country not having a fixture over the current international break.

"This break will be nice for me to try and get some fitness and sharpness back," said the 29-year-old.

"I'll be working hard to hopefully make sure I am back in the sort of form that I was in at the start of the season."

Morrison started the season brightly, scoring two and setting up two.

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Tipton Town suffer a high five from SC

Tipton Town 0 Wolverhampton SC 5
TIPTON Town suffered a West Midlands Premier lesson at the hands of Wolverhampton Sporting.

The young home side had given a fine showing in midweek, holding Wolverhampton Casuals to a draw, but had no answer to a visiting attack which has now netted 43 goals in 11 games.

Jon Crawford's fine drive in the third minute, flisted over the top by Sporting keeper Luke Stevens, heralded a continuing improvement for Paul Totney's youngsters which was underlined when Gagondeep Singh crashed a header against the bar.

Sandeep Singh's cross across the Sporting goalmouth found no takers.

But Sporting picked up the pace and went ahead on 24 minutes, Danny Westwood powering home a header.

Visibly shaken, the home youngsters became easy prey for their more astute adversaries who bagged a second goal two minutes later when Jon Letford drew keeper Callum Whitehouse and stroked the ball home.

Whitehouse saved well and Westwood clipped the bar with a header before the third goal, forced over the line by Nathan Cain following a corner.

Second-half goals from Letford, chipping the keeper, and Westwood, bursting past two tackles before scoring, rounded it off.

Tipton began the second spell on the attack, Gagandeep Singh taking up a highly promising position but tossing his advantage away by firing wildly high and wide.

Back came Sporting, hitting the bar but then netting the fourth when he chipped Whitehouse with aplomb.

Westwood rounded off the scoring, riding two tackles and tucking the ball away.

Bright start but two goals in two minutes sink Tivs

Tivdale 1 Leek Town 2

TWO goals in as many first-half minutes condemned Tivdale to an Evo-Stik Division One South defeat.

They began brightly, Mark Danks' chipping keeper Sheridan Martinez but seeing his effort drift agonisingly wide.

Chris Sterling then played in Chris Rabone, whose shot lacked power.

Two minutes later Sterling played the ball into Chris Rabone but his shot lacked any power and it was comfortably gathered by Martinez.

The visitors then took over, Tim Grice heading against the bar and Niall Maguire then scoring from 20 yards. He unleashed a shot from 20 yards, that although Tivdale keeper Tom Turner got a hand to, he could not keep it out.

Two minutes later though it was two. Chris Baker won the ball in the middle of the park and sent Dan Cope away down the right flank.

Cope then found Grice with a superb cross and the big frontman made no mistake with his header. On 77 minutes Sterling halved the deficit, but there was to be no equaliser.

Hockey Firsts keep success running

Sutton Coldfield 1 Old Hales Mens 1st 3

OLD Halesonians Hockey Club Men's 1st XI continued their excellent start to the season with a victory away at Sutton Coldfield, leaving them third in the league after four victories from six games.

Both sides had chances, with Ash Greaves unlucky not to open the account for the away side when a Sutton defender, incredibly, took a rising hit on the line with his stick, after the keeper had been taken out of play from the first save.

At the other end, Sutton struggled to get through a back line which was well marshalled by captain Paul Woodall and player-coach Mark

Hockey

Curzon, but when they did, they couldn't get the ball past MoM goalkeeper, Steven Charlton.

The second half saw Hales start to control possession, but it was the hosts who scored first with a short-corner routine.

This did not deter the visitors though, and they were soon level from their own short-corner.

Tom Bulteel's raising flick was saved by the host keeper, but captain Woodall was the quickest to react and slotted home.

This dented the confidence of the hosts and

Hales started to threaten much more frequently. Their endeavours were soon rewarded when Cole Hickman finally ending his own goal drought as he powered home a strike from the top of the attacking circle.

As Sutton pushed for an equaliser, gaps appeared in their defence and Greaves completed the scoring as he slotted into the near post as they went to cut out the ball across the D.

Hales host unbeaten top-of-the-table Worcester on Saturday at King Edward Five Ways School, 1.30pm push back.

Other club results saw the Ladies 1st XI lose 4-1 away at Droitwich as they remain mid-table.

DAN'S THE MAN FOR YELTZ WIN

Halesowen Town 2 Leek Town 1

HALESOWEN'S Danny Bragoli steered home Halesowen's late winner in the Integro Doodson League Cup.

Reece Hales gave Halesowen a second minute lead with an inch-perfect delivery into the top corner directly from a 25 yard free-kick.

But the lead lasted only three minutes as Lee Cropper lashed the Leek equaliser inwith home goalkeeper Matt Sargeant rooted to the spot.

Sargeant then turned Kyle Diskin's 14th minute free-kick around his post.

Leek goalkeeper Sherdow Martinez then made a fine blocking save from Nathan Waite after 22 minutes with Keyon Refell only able to plant the rebound wide of the post.

Seconds before the interval Leek's Jon Beaumont curled a 20 yard effort onto the roof of the Halesowen net.

The Yeltz grabbed the 75th minute winner after substitute Isaac Cooper's corner was cleared off the line, but Danny Bragoli collected the ball on the edge of the area to fire into the corner of the net.

Colwyn Bay 1 Halesowen 1

A free-kick from Reece Hales rescued a well-earned point for Halesowen in a 1-1 draw at Colwyn Bay.

The new-look home side went into the Evo-Stik Northern Premier game on a five-match losing run but started well, Yeltz keeper Daniel Platt twice denying John Marsden.

Halesowen had just one shot at goal in the first half, but improved after the interval and it needed a couple of fine blocks by Will Bell and a goal-saving tackle by Josh Sumner on Aaron Daniels to deny the visitors.

But Colwyn Bay got back on top, Kev Holsgrave's shot deflected for a corner and James Graham heading narrowly wide from a corner.

The Yeltz looked to have lost it on 77 minutes when John Marsden's shot on the run from the edge of the area went inside the far post to put the home side ahead.

But Hales stepped up on 84 minutes with a superb free-kick by Hales to save a pointand substitute Jean Michel Gueyes could have won it at the end only to be denied by a tackle from Bell.

Albion miss their chances



James McClean can't believe Saido Berahino has missed an unmarked header from six yards out

Man Utd 2 Albion 0

PERHAPS Manchester United away is not the best game to use as ammunition to criticise Tony Pulis' style of play.

Better teams than Albion will go to Old Trafford and lose this season. Better teams than Albion will go there and stick 10 men behind the ball.

Louis van Gaal has assembled a team of mega-stars for a quarter of a billion pounds and Pulis' best players are those the Dutchman didn't think were good enough for his team. But it was impossible to escape the feeling at Old Trafford that United were there to be shot

at. On another day it could have worked. Had Saido Berahino put away his simple header with 15 minutes to go then there would have been no need for Jonny Evans to try and play an unsuccessful one-two with Stephane Sessegnon in the 90th minute that left Gareth McAuley exposed to Anthony Martial's pace.

Before the weekend the Baggies had kept four clean sheets out of five away games.

The only two goals to breach Boaz Myhill's net were the two in that lacklustre defeat at Crystal Palace. It was the best away record in the league.

Despite the Berahino miss, Albion fans will not feel like they deserved anything.

Boss Garde brings calm, says keeper

GOALKEEPER Brad Guzan has credited new boss Remi Garde with bringing a sense of calm to Villa's dressing room.

The shot-stopper also believes Garde's arrival has boosted the confidence of several players.

Villa, bottom of the Premier League, ended a run of seven straight league defeats with a 0-0 draw against leaders Manchester City on Sunday.

And Guzan said: "He has brought a calm demeanour to training and to the dressing room."

"I think you could see his demeanour on the side of the pitch. He has given the boys confidence and that belief."

"When you are at the bottom, you need all those things. You need that backing from the manager for the guys to go out and play well."

"Especially for some of our lads, he has given them a real boost."

The clean sheet against City was just Villa's second of the season in the Premier League and their first since the opening day. And while they remain five points deep in the drop zone, Guzan reckons stopping the losing run was key.

"It was huge to stop the rot, going forward we know it is going to be a tough task we are still in the bottom three," said Guzan.

"We still need to fight and improve our performances. But this is a step in the right direction, we needed to stop the string of losing results."

"We needed to give ourselves a platform to go forward and something for us to build on."

"There are not many people in the country who have given us hope to get something against Man City and probably to avoid the drop. But hopefully this is the turning point for us."

Glassboys look for another special day

BOSS Gary Hackett is hoping Stourbridge can produce "one more special day" after being drawn at home to Eastleigh in the FA Cup second round.

Having already seen off Kidderminster Harriers and Dover Athletic to reach this stage of the competition, the Glassboys have been handed National League Premier opponents again as they try to reach the third round for the first time ever.

Eastleigh are seventh in non-league's top flight - and beat League One Crewe in the last round.

But Hackett said: "I am just hoping for one more special day."

★★★

The Chronicle, a Midland News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Ketley, Telford. Thursday, November 12, 2015

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